

# The Heavenly Court, Courtly Ceremony, and the Great Byzantine Ivory Triptychs of the Tenth Century

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*In his bodily essence, the emperor is the  
equal of every man, but in the power of  
his rank he is like God over men*

—Agapetos,  
*Advice to the Emperor Justinian*, 21<sup>1</sup>

*The solicitude of the emperor will  
in future extend to all things and  
his foresight controls and governs  
everything*

—Leo VI, *Novel* 47<sup>2</sup>

## The Emperor, Christ, and the Ivory

The ivory triptych now in the Palazzo Venezia in Rome (cat. no. 1) gives us perhaps the most precious

1 Agapetos Diakonos, *Der Fürstenspiegel für Kaiser Iustinianos*, ed. R. Riedinger, Hetaireia Philon tou Laou Kentron Ereunes Byzantiniou 4 (Athens, 1995), 38 [para. 21]: Τῇ μὲν οὐσίᾳ τοῦ σώματος ἴσος παντὸς ἀνθρώπου ὁ βασιλεὺς, τῇ ἐξουσίᾳ δὲ τοῦ ἀξιώματος ὁμοίος ἐστὶ τῷ πάντων θεῷ; trans. P. N. Bell, *Three Political Voices from the Age of Justinian: Agapetus, Advice to the Emperor, Dialogue on Political Science, Paul the Silentiary, Description of Hagia Sophia* (Liverpool, 2009), 107 [para. 21].

2 Leo VI, *Les Nouvelles de Léon VI le Sage*, ed. P. Noailles and A. Dain (Paris, 1944), 187 (*Novel* 47): Νῦν δὲ τῆς βασιλικῆς φροντίδος πάντων ἐξηρητημένων καὶ σὺν Θεῷ τῇ ταύτης προνοίᾳ καὶ σκοπούμενων καὶ διαιτωμένων καὶ χρεῖαν οὐδεμίαν ἐκείνου τοῦ νόμου παρεχομένου μετὰ τῶν ἄλλων.

and exquisite representation of the heavenly court, an idealized vision of the realm of God as imagined by a Byzantine artist in the middle of the tenth century.<sup>3</sup> The ivory does not depict any particular ceremony or ritual; rather, it is an abstracted representation of the ceremonial structure of the heavenly court. At its center stands Christ, the emperor of heaven, the king of glory, and to either side of him stand family intimates: his mother, the Theotokos; and St. John the Baptist. Arrayed beyond this inner circle are the officials of the heavenly court: apostles on the center panel below Christ; martyrs, warriors, and doctors and fathers of the church on the wings beyond. It is an image of *taxis*, divine order; everyone and everything in its place, presided over by Christ himself, the single source of power. This vision of heaven was made for an emperor Constantine, who is named in one of a series of five inscriptions that adorn every face of the object. It has long been recognized that this must be Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, who ruled the

3 A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X–XIII Jahrhunderts*, vol. 2, *Reliefs* (Berlin, 1934), 15–17, cat. 31 (hereafter GW 2); the most recent publication on the triptych concentrates on its later history in Italy: S. Moretti, “Viaggio di un trittico eburneo da Costantinopoli a Roma: Note in margine al ‘Corpus degli oggetti bizantini in Italia,’” in *La Sapienza bizantina: Un secolo di ricerche sulla civiltà di Bisanzio all’Università di Roma*, ed. G. Cavallo et al., Milion. Studi e ricerche d’arte bizantina 8 (Rome, 2012), 225–44.



Byzantine empire between 913 and 959, although he exercised power independently only after 945.

The themes of the three inscriptions on the interior—imperial victory (left wing), imperial virtue (right wing), and imperial health (central panel)—dominate the ways in which the triptych has been interpreted. It has been seen in terms of the ideology of holy war in the tenth century; it has been seen in terms of the ineffable, imperial qualities of the ruler.<sup>4</sup> In more practical terms, it has been seen as a votive offering to secure the health of the emperor Constantine—a vehicle for prayer and intercession. Overall, it has been presented as a road map to redemption in which the location and meaning of each figure has been explored and linked to the economy of salvation.<sup>5</sup> However, the ivory is also important for what it can tell us about the nature of the Byzantine court and its ceremonial in the tenth century.<sup>6</sup> The ivory is the concrete (or rather dentine) manifestation of ritual and ceremony. Although it must always be remembered that the ivory's ostensible purpose was to act as a focus of prayer, its ceremonial role will be the principal concern of this essay.

It is likely that we can narrow the date of the ivory down to the end of Constantine VII's reign. Not only did he then rule on his own, after thirty years in the shadows of other co-emperors, regents, and usurpers, but he also then suffered poor health, to which the main inscription makes reference.<sup>7</sup> These years coincide

with what has always been regarded as the heyday of Byzantine ceremonial. These were the decades during which Byzantium saw the revival of the great triumphal processions of late antiquity. Eight such triumphs are recorded in Constantinople between 956 and 972, beginning with two celebrated by Constantine VII himself.<sup>8</sup> These military processions were paralleled by religious ones, such as that for the reception of the Mandyllion from Edessa that Constantine VII witnessed as it was paraded through Constantinople on the Feast of the Koimesis in 944.<sup>9</sup> Constantine VII's reign also saw the recording of imperial rituals and protocols and their codification in the *Book of Ceremonies* alongside older texts such as the *Kleterologion* of Philotheos (of 899).<sup>10</sup> Dismissed by Edward Gibbon as that "recital, tedious yet imperfect, of the despicable pageantry which had infected the church and state since the gradual decay of the purity of the one, and the power of the other," the *Book of Ceremonies* epitomizes modern clichés of an empire that is calcified and unchanging, obsessed with precedent, cocooned in rituals, but above all centered on the person of the emperor.<sup>11</sup> The ivories of the tenth century can help us understand more about the structure and mechanisms of that ceremonial and challenge some perceptions of the idea of central, imperial control.

4 N. Oikonomides, "The Concept of 'Holy War' in Two Tenth-Century Byzantine Ivories," in *Peace and War in Byzantium: Essays in Honor of George T. Dennis, S.J.*, ed. T. S. Miller and J. Nesbitt (Washington, DC, 1995), 62–86; R. S. Nelson, "And So, With the Help of God: The Byzantine Art of War in the Tenth Century," *DOP* 65–66 (2011–12): 169–92, esp. 186–88; B. V. Pentcheva, *Icons and Power: The Mother of God in Byzantium* (University Park, PA, 2006), 81–86.

5 The fullest study here relates to the Harbaville Triptych: J. Durand and M. Durand, "À propos du triptyque 'Harbaville': Quelques remarques d'iconographie médio-byzantine," in *Patrimoine des Balkans: Voskopojë sans frontières 2004*, ed. M. Durand (Paris, 2005), 133–55.

6 The only study to examine this takes a very different approach from that adopted here: E. Kantorowicz, "Ivories and Litanies," *JWarb* 5 (1942): 56–81.

7 The death poem of Constantine VII also alludes to his many illnesses and troubles: I. Ševčenko, "Poems on the Deaths of Leo VI and Constantine VII in the Madrid Manuscript of Scylitzes," *DOP* 23–24 (1969–70): 185–228, esp. 210, lines 9–10:

Δεινῶν πολλῶν ἐρρύσατο θεός σε, Κωνσταντίνε,  
ἀλλὰ τὸ τέλος ἄφευκτον, ἀνελῆξ ὀλίθος.

O Constantine, the Lord hath from many ills delivered,

And yet the end no one can flee. The tombstone knows no mercy.

8 956: Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos over Abu'l 'Asha'ir; 956: Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos over an Islamic fleet from Tarsus; 958/59: defeat of Naja al-Kasaki; 960: victory over Abu Sayf; 961: recapture of Crete by Nikephoros II Phokas; 965: capture of Tarsos; 971: John I Tzimiskes and the procession of the Preslav icon after his Bulgarian campaign; 972/73: conquest of Nisibis by John I Tzimiskes. Nikephoros II Phokas effectively celebrated another triumphal entry into Constantinople in 963, when he came to the city to claim the imperial crown. Later, Basil II celebrated triumphs in 989 over Bardas Phokas and in 1019 over the Bulgarians. See M. McCormick, *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium, and the Early Medieval West*, Past and Present Publications (Cambridge, 1986), 159–78.

9 A.-M. Dubarle, "L'homélie de Grégoire le Référendaire pour la réception de l'image d'Edesse," *REB* 55 (1997): 5–51.

10 Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, trans. A. Moffatt and M. Tall, ByzAus 18 (Canberra, 2012), including Greek text edited by J. J. Reiske, *De ceremoniis aulae Byzantinae*, CSHB (Bonn, 1829–31).

11 E. Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ed. D. Womersley (London, 1994), 3:382 (chap. 53).

As befits an image of the heavenly court made for the key figure in the earthly court, the ivory is an object of exquisite craftsmanship and quality. The lustrous sheen of ivory and the crispness that its finely grained, dense texture allows is like no other, and it enabled its carver to give his figures a real solidity and weight, and recreate every aspect of courtly dress and protocol. Despite his (rhetorical) claims of inadequacy, the artist was a true master. He depicted every lace on the boots, the twisting threads of the tassels that hang from the clasp securing the chlamys on the saints' shoulders, the woven decoration of cuffs, and the jewels affixed to hems. All this was achieved on figures no more than 65 mm high. Fragments of gold leaf, enhanced by red paint, that survive on the haloes suggest that the appearance of the ivory was originally even richer and more magnificent.<sup>12</sup> This is workmanship of the highest quality.

The formal qualities of the ivory and its medium combine to present an image of political stability: the heavenly court is timeless and static. No one moves, and with their rigid, erect poses, no one is about to move; there is no sense of even a breeze to ripple the cloaks of the soldiers, martyrs, and apostles. The presentation of the court reflects the definition of eternity proposed by Maximos the Confessor in the seventh century: "eternity is time deprived of movement, and time is eternity measured by movement."<sup>13</sup> The only hint of speech comes from the frozen gestures of the Virgin and John the Baptist, to which Christ responds with his raised right hand. Otherwise, the ivory is as silent as the emperor during a reception. When the ambassador Liutprand of Cremona was presented at the Magnaura palace in 949, he was only ever addressed by the emperor through an intermediary.<sup>14</sup> On the ivory,

the intermediary is present again, speaking through the inscriptions, which are couched in an anonymous third-person voice. The ivory provides a distillation of the image of Christ's court that appears in the Last Judgment, underlining the solemnity of its proceedings and the importance of the decisions it reached.<sup>15</sup> In images of the Last Judgment, the ranking of the saved according to hierarchy is always present, but the formal structure of the court and its supplicants seeking entry into paradise is too often overshadowed by the power of the narrative and the compulsive, and worryingly seductive, attraction of figures roasting in hell.<sup>16</sup>

The hierarchy and order of the saints on the triptych and the centrality of the ruler and his intimates present a visual paradigm for the structure of the Byzantine court in Constantinople. Indeed, the ivories are perfect miniature idealizations of the nature and hierarchy of the Byzantine court. At the center stand Christ and his intimates, a model for the emperor and his family. This composition, conventionally known as the Deësis, came to prominence in Byzantine art as an image of the witnessing of Christ's divinity.<sup>17</sup> In the course of the tenth century, the Deësis developed an intercessory function as a means to guide viewers' prayers to Christ through his closest earthly intermediaries. That must be its principal role on the Palazzo Venezia triptych. However, in the context of the pomp of the court, it gained a second, equally important, function as a representation of the nature and form of power. Power ultimately resides in the central figure of the ruler, here Christ, but it is exercised through the mediation of his relatives—his mother, and his cousin.

The intimacy of power and family at the heavenly court finds a direct visual reflection in the way

12 My observation of the ivories suggests that color was used more restrictively than proposed by C. Connor, *The Color of Ivory: Polychromy on Byzantine Ivories* (Princeton, NJ, 1998), 9–22, 67–81.

13 Maximos Confessor, *Ambiguorum Liber* 10, in PG 91:1164C: "Αἰὼν γὰρ ἐστὶν ὁ χρόνος, ὅταν στῇ τῆς κινήσεως, καὶ χρόνος ἐστὶν ὁ αἰὼν, ὅταν μετρήται κινήσει φερόμενος, ὡς εἶναι τὸν μὲν αἰῶνα, ἵνα ὡς ἐν ὄρω περιλαβὼν εἴπω, χρόνον ἐστερημένον κινήσεως, τὸν δὲ χρόνον αἰῶνα κινήσει μετρούμενον"; trans. A. Louth, *Maximos the Confessor* (London, 1996), 131; ed. and trans. N. Constas, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers: The Ambigua*, DOML 28 (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 262.

14 Liutprand of Cremona, *Antapodosis* 3.5, *Liutprandi Cremonensis Antapodosis; Homelia paschalis; Historia Ottonis; Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana*, ed. P. Chiesa, *Corpus Christianorum*

*Continuatio Mediaevalis* 156 (Turnhout, 1998); trans. B. Scott, *Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana*, *Reading Medieval and Renaissance Texts* 4 (Bristol, 1993), 35.

15 N. P. Sevcenko, "Some Images of the Second Coming and the Fate of the Soul in Middle Byzantine Art," in *Apocalyptic Themes in Early Christianity*, ed. R. Daly (Brookline, MA, 2009), 250–72.

16 M. Angheben, "Les jugements derniers byzantins des XI<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles et l'iconographie du jugement immédiat," *CabArch* 49 (2002): 105–34.

17 RBK 1:1178–86, s.v. *Deesis*; Pentcheva, *Icons and Power* (above, n. 4), 111–13; C. Walter, "Two Notes on the Deësis," *REB* 26 (1968): 311–36; idem, "Further Notes on the Deësis," *REB* 28 (1968): 161–87, both reprinted in his *Studies in Byzantine Iconography*, *Variorum Collected Studies* 65 (London, 1977), *Studies* 1 and 2.

the imperial family stands around the emperor Nikephoros II Phokas in the north apse of the Pigeon House Church at Çavuşin in Cappadocia, dated by their presence to 963–69 (figs. 1 and 2).<sup>18</sup> Here the emperor appears between his empress, Theophano, two figures identified only by their titles as the Caesar (his father Bardas) and the Kouropalates (his brother Leo), and another unknown figure beyond them, presumably also a family member.<sup>19</sup> Poses are clearly adapted from the iconography of the Deësis: the right hand of the emperor raised away from his body, the left hand holding an attribute in front of his chest; the empress gesturing toward her husband. But equally, much has changed: the emperor holds a cross not a book;<sup>20</sup> he touches his wife rather than blesses the viewer (perhaps to acknowledge her importance in securing his own place on the throne); and, most obviously, all wear imperial regalia.<sup>21</sup> The placement of the royal family in the north apse is paired with an image of the Theotokos in the south apse. It was therefore possible for viewers to read the three apses as a larger Deësis-like composition, with Christ in Majesty in the conch of the main apse, and the imperial family taking the place of John

18 G. de Jerphanion, *Une nouvelle province de l'art byzantin: Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, vol. 1.2 (Paris, 1932), 523; N. Thierry, *Haut moyen-âge en Cappadoce: Les églises de la région de Çavuşin*, vol. 1 (Paris, 1983), 43:

ΤΟΥΣ ΑΙΨΕΒΕΙΣ ΗΜΩΝ ΒΑΣΕΙΛΗC  
ΔΗΑΦΟΙΛΑΖΟΝ ΚΕ ΠΑΝΤΟΤΑΙ  
ΔΕCΠΝΟC ΗΜΩΝ  
ΝΗΚΗΦΟΡΟΝ ΚΕ ΘΑΙΦΑΝΟΝC

Τοὺς εὐσεβεῖς ἡμῶν βασιλεῖς διαφύλαξον Κύριε πάντοτε  
Νικήφορον καὶ δέσποιναν ἡμῶν Θεοφανώ

Lord protect always our pious emperors, Nikephoros and  
Theophano, our sovereign

L. Rodley, "The Pigeon House Church, Çavuşin," *JÖB* 33 (1983): 301–39, at 309.

19 De Jerphanion, *Les églises rupestres de Cappadoce*, 524; Thierry, *Haut moyen-âge en Cappadoce*, 45:

ΚCΑΡΟC  
ΚΟΡΟΠΑΛΑΤΗC

20 Rodley, "Pigeon House Church, Çavuşin," 310, sees this as a limitation on the artist's skill at adapting formulae from other saints for an imperial image.

21 H. Maguire, "The Heavenly Court," in *Byzantine Court Culture from 829 to 1204*, ed. idem (Washington, DC, 1997), 247–58, esp. 257–58, notes that in accounts of the heavenly court in this period, Christ never wears imperial regalia, which are reserved for his courtiers.



FIG. 1 Nikephoros II Phokas and family: north apse of the Pigeon House Church at Çavuşin, Cappadocia, 963–69 (photo © Niamh Bhalla)

the Baptist to Christ's right.<sup>22</sup> The decision to place Nikephoros in an apse speaks of the semi-sacral position of the emperor, and this is underscored by the appearance of Sts. Constantine and Helena, who appear in the main apse beneath Christ in identical poses and dress to the imperial family.<sup>23</sup> The emphasis on family draws attention to the need for the emperors of the mid-tenth century to establish the legitimacy of their rule through blood links to the Macedonian dynasty, and their (often misplaced) reliance on family as a source of loyal workers to execute their policies.<sup>24</sup> Constantine VII, for

22 C. Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce: Le programme iconographique de l'abside et de ses abords* (Paris, 1991), 15–22.

23 Ibid., 17–19; Rodley, "Pigeon House Church, Çavuşin," 310.

24 For the Macedonians' attempts to link themselves to Constantine the Great: *Chronographiae quae Theophanis Continuati*



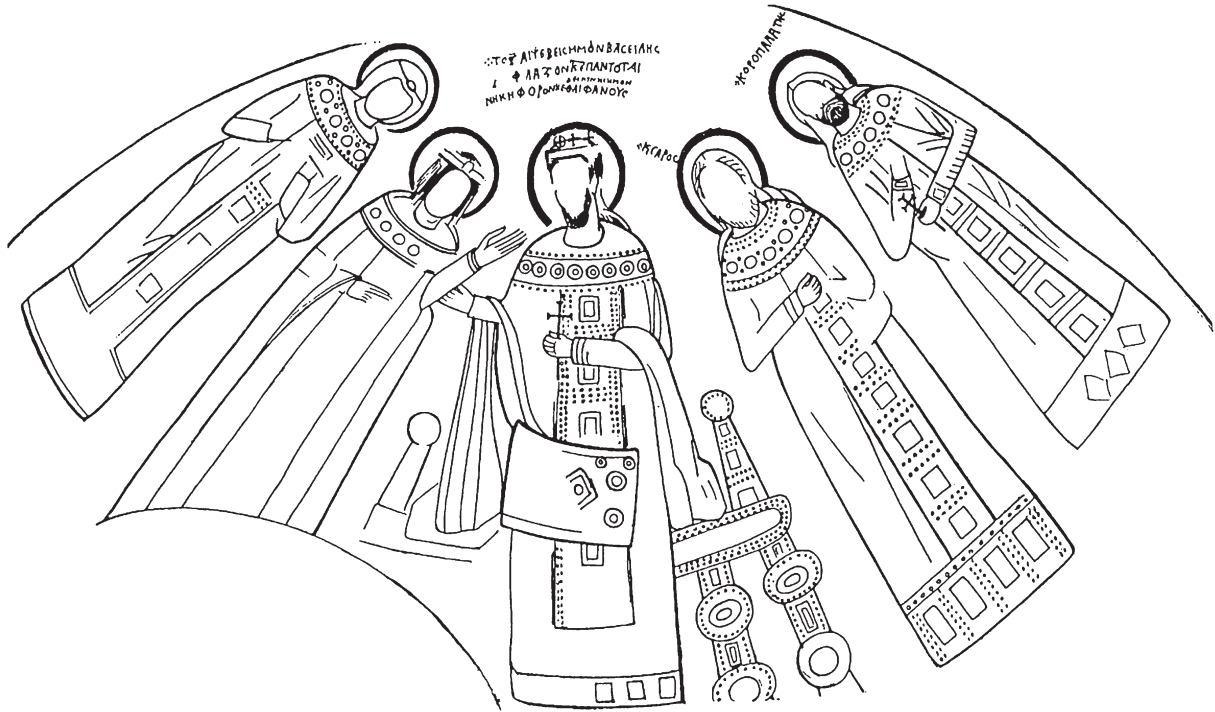


FIG. 2 North apse of the Pigeon House Church at Çavuşin, Cappadocia, 963–69, schema of figures (after N. Thierry, *Haut moyen-âge en Cappadoce: Les églises de la région de Çavuşin*, vol. 1 [Paris, 1983])

example, was crowned as co-emperor in May 908 by his father Leo VI, but he took power only more than three decades later, in 945. Before then he was required to rule with others: his uncle, Alexander; then his mother, Zoe; then his father-in-law, Romanos I Lekapenos; and finally Romanos's sons, Stephen and Constantine. All used their relationship to Constantine as the basis for their own legitimacy, just as Nikephoros II married Theophano, the widow of Constantine VII's heir Romanos II, to promote his.

Even the operation of the Palazzo Venezia ivory invokes the processional protocols of the Byzantine court. The act of opening the doors to reveal the heart of the court recalls the sequences of processions and revelations that fill the *Book of Ceremonies*, including the raising and lowering of curtains or the opening and closing of the silver doors of the Chrysotriklinos to reveal or conceal the emperor.<sup>25</sup> The organization of

the saints into hierarchies reflects those of the earthly court, such as the finely gradated divisions between the seemingly endless ranks of higher and subordinate officials who attend formal palace banquets in the *Kleterologion*, or the litanies recited during the liturgy.<sup>26</sup> However, the arrangement of the saints on the wings is perhaps surprising. The outside of the triptychs, the first line of defense, is manned primarily by the church fathers, including John Chrysostom, Basil, and Gregory the Theologian, rather than armed warriors. Thus, the primary protection of the heavenly court is handed over to theologians, who defend Christ by upholding dogma and Orthodoxy. The warriors and martyrs are closest to Christ, inverting the normal arrangement of proximity seen in monumental decoration.<sup>27</sup> At Çavuşin, as the royal family looked out on the rest of the church from

*nomine fertur liber quo Vita Basilii imperatoris amplectitur*, ed. I. Ševčenko, CFHB (Series Berolinensis) 42 (Berlin, 2011), chap. 3.

25 Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *Book of Ceremonies*, 1.38, 1.39.

26 Ibid., 2.52; Kantorowicz, "Ivories and Litanies" (n. 6 above).

27 First noted by Ioli Kalavrezou in *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843–1261*, ed. H. C. Evans and W. D. Wixom (New York, 1997), cats. 79 and 80. Now elaborated extensively by Durand and Durand, "À propos du triptyque 'Harbaville'" (n. 5 above).



FIG. 3 Two equestrian figures and the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia: north wall of the Pigeon House Church at Çavuşin, Cappadocia, 963–69 (photo © Niamh Bhalla)

the north apse, they saw a vision of the court similar to that arrayed on the ivory. The north wall is dominated by warrior saints: members of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia, all dressed in military garb and individually named (fig. 3).<sup>28</sup> The procession is led by two men on horseback who further blur the line between the heavenly and earthly courts: the two equestrian saints closest to the north apse bear inscriptions with the names Melias Magistros and the “emperor John” (presumably Tzimiskes [r. 969–976]).<sup>29</sup> On the ivory triptych the

warrior saints wear not cuirass and skirt, but courtly garb (only their swords allude to their functions),<sup>30</sup> perhaps eliding their identities with the military, land-owning elite, the *dynatoi*, the “powerful,” which had become increasingly influential at the Byzantine court under Romanos I Lekapenos.<sup>31</sup>

Thus Christ provides a model for the rule of emperors on earth. This was well established in Byzantine political ideology.<sup>32</sup> In the sixth century

#### ΚΕ ΒΟΗΘΙ ΤΟΝ ΔΔΛΟΝ ΣΟΝ ΜΕΛΙΑΝ ΜΑΓΙΣΤΡΟΝ

κύριε βοήθει τὸν δοῦλόν σου Μελίαν μάγιστρον

Lord, help your slave, Melias Magistros

28 Rodley, “Pigeon House Church, Çavuşin,” 314–19; 4 of the 40 martyrs appear on the intrados of the main apse. Jolivet-Lévy, *Les églises byzantines de Cappadoce*, 19, notes their “rôle protecteur et prophylactique particulier” in this location.

29 Ibid., 528–30; Thierry, *Haut moyen-âge en Cappadoce*, 49–51; idem, “Un portrait de Jean Tzimiskès en Cappadoce,” *TM* 9 (1985): 477–84:

ΙΩΑΝ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΟΣ ΠΟΛΑ ΤΑ ΕΤΗ

Ἰωάννου Βασιλέως πολλὰ τὰ ἔτη

To John, emperor, many years

30 M. White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus, 900–1200* (Cambridge, 2013), 78–80; P. Grotowski, *Arms and Armour of the Warrior Saints: Tradition and Innovation in Byzantine Iconography (843–1261)* (Leiden and Boston, 2010), 104–7.

31 R. Morris, “The Powerful and the Poor in Tenth-Century Byzantium: Law and Reality,” *Past and Present* 73 (1976): 3–27.

32 The idea can be traced back to Eusebius, *Life of Constantine*, ed. A. Cameron and S. G. Hall (Oxford, 1999), 1:38.



Agapetos opened his appeal to the emperor Justinian in these terms:

Since you have a dignity beyond all other honour, Emperor, honour, beyond all others, God, who dignified you. For it was in the likeness of the Heavenly Kingdom that he gave you the sceptre of earthly rule that you might teach men the protection of justice and drive away the howling of those who rave against it, just as you are ruled by the laws of justice and rule lawfully those subject to you.<sup>33</sup>

Similar beliefs were echoed in the claims made for imperial power by Leo in his *Novel* 47 (quoted at the head of this paper). History writers claimed imperial inspiration for their work: in the *prooimion* of Theophanes Continuatus, the writer names Constantine VII as the true author and downplays his own role to that of compiler and scribe.<sup>34</sup> Even craftsmanship was an imperial attribute. The inscriptions on the interior of the Palazzo Venezia triptych give the emperor all the credit as the instigator of the work, while the carver's hands "were at a loss trying to represent Christ." Such sentiments as these bolstered the status of the emperor and created the image of Constantine VII as an accomplished artist as well as ruler.<sup>35</sup>

One further visual manifestation of the intertwining of Christ and the emperor comes in the visual correspondence between Constantine VII and Christ

on the coronation ivory in Moscow (cat. no. 9): both share the same long face and straight nose (although they have carefully distinguished beards).<sup>36</sup> However, there is an obvious circularity in both depictions: the artist's vision of Christ and his courtiers can have been based only on the existing model of the emperor and the earthly hierarchy of the Byzantine court. The emperor provided the example, which was then modeled by Christ. Once established, this heavenly court then legitimated the form of the imperial court. The repeated reproduction of the heavenly court on various objects clearly sought to underline the idea of a timeless and unchanging court on earth.<sup>37</sup>

### The Ivories as a Group

The image of the heavenly court proposed on the Palazzo Venezia triptych proved popular, and almost identical imagery is found again on two other surviving ivories. These are the triptych now in the Museo Sacro in the Vatican and the Harbaville triptych in the Musée du Louvre (cat. nos. 2 and 3).<sup>38</sup> These three ivories can be associated with another three triptychs, all of which show the Crucifixion on their central panels (cat. nos. 4–6).<sup>39</sup> The six triptychs lie at the heart of a larger cluster of ivories: two ivories showing the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia (cat. nos. 7 and 8);<sup>40</sup> two plaques that depict the emperor and Christ (cat. nos. 9 and 10);<sup>41</sup> the ivory reliquary of the True Cross now in Cortona (cat. no. 11);<sup>42</sup> and a number of panels from diptychs (or

33 Agapetos Diakonos, *Der Fürstenspiegel für Kaiser Iustinianos*, 26 [para. 1]: Τιμῆς ἀπάσης ὑπέρτερον ἔχων ἀξίωνα, βασιλεῦ, τιμᾶς ὑπὲρ ἅπαντας τὸν τούτον σε ἀξιώσαντα θεόν, ὅτι καὶ καθ' ὁμοίωσιν τῆς ἐπουρανίου βασιλείας ἔδωκέ σοι τὸ σκῆπτρον τῆς ἐπιγείου δυναστείας, ἵνα τοὺς ἀνθρώπους διδάξης τὴν τοῦ δικαίου φυλακὴν καὶ τῶν κατ' αὐτοῦ λυσσώντων ἐκδιώξης τὴν ὑλακὴν ὑπὸ τῶν αὐτοῦ βασιλεύοντων νόμων καὶ τῶν ὑπὸ σὲ βασιλεύοντων ἐννόμως; trans. Bell, *Three Political Voices*, 99 [para. 1]. G. Dagron, *Emperor and Priest: The Imperial Office in Byzantium*, Past and Present (Cambridge, 2003), 18.

34 Theophanes Continuatus, *Theophanes continuatus: Ioannes Cameniata, Symeon Magister, Georgius monachus*, ed. I. Bekker, CSHB 43 (Bonn, 1838), 3–5.

35 Ibid., 450 [Book 6.22]; trans. C. Mango, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire 312–1453* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ, 1972), 208; compare Liutprand of Cremona, *Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana*, Antapodosis 3.37; trans. Scott, *Relatio de Legatione Constantinopolitana*, 3.37. A. Stránský, "Costantino VII Porfirogenito, amante delle arti e collezionista," in *Atti del V Congresso internazionale di studi bizantini, Roma 1936*, vol. 2, SBN 6 (Rome, 1940), 412–22.

36 *Byzantium 330–1453*, ed. R. Cormack and M. Vassilaki (London, 2008), cat. 68. See also *Mandylion: Intorno al Sacro Volto, da Bisanzio a Genova*, ed. G. Wolf, C. D. Bozzo, and A. R. Calderoni Masetti (Milan, 2004), 87–89. A similar facial overlap is visible in the depiction of Abgar holding the Mandylion on the wings of the lost Mandylion icon on Sinai: K. Weitzmann, "The Mandylion and Constantine Porphyrogennetos," *CahArch* 11 (1960): 163–84, esp. 182; *Mandylion*, 81–85; *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground: Icons from Sinai*, ed. R. S. Nelson and K. M. Collins (Los Angeles, 2006), cat. 6.

37 Maguire, "Heavenly Court" (n. 21 above), 247–58.

38 GW 2, nos. 32 (Vatican), 33 (Harbaville); D. Gaborit-Chopin, *Ivoires médiévaux V<sup>e</sup>–XV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 2003), no. 16.

39 GW 2, nos. 38 (British Museum), 72 (Berlin), 39 (Cabinet des Médailles).

40 Ibid., nos. 10 (Berlin), 9 (St. Petersburg).

41 Ibid., nos. 35 (Moscow), 34 (Cabinet des Médailles, Paris).

42 Ibid., no. 77.



possibly larger ensembles) (cat. nos. 12 and 13);<sup>43</sup> and a series of plaques that seem to come from a miniature epistyle beam (cat. nos. 14 and 15).<sup>44</sup> Considering these ivories as a group allows us to examine ceremony in a different way and deconstruct the image of the court as a centralized monolith of power and ritual as presented in the Palazzo Venezia triptych. The broader consideration allows us to see ceremony not as a thing but as a fragmented, contested process.

This larger group of ivories is connected only loosely. Much scholarly dispute remains about the exact nature of their relationship, particularly the relative date of each ivory and the number of craftsmen involved in their production. The evidence for their manufacture has been brought together by Anthony Cutler in a number of major studies. The core piece in his research is the ivory showing the imperial couple Romanos and Eudokia (cat. no. 10), for which he has produced compelling evidence to link it with Romanos II (r. 959–963), rather than Romanos IV Diogenes (1068–71).<sup>45</sup> Through his close technical observations he has associated this ivory with the triptych of the Crucifixion also in the Cabinet des Médailles (cat. no. 6), as well as a diptych now divided between Hanover and Dresden, and a number of other plaques, proposing all were carved by the same hand.<sup>46</sup> Around this he has built a number of what he calls “minimal clusters” (i.e., ivories made by one hand), all of which he places in the decades around the middle of the tenth century. In more general terms, the overwhelming similarity in scale and proportion of the great triptychs indicates a common aesthetic that relied on access to large tusks and a desire to exploit the usable ivory to produce plaques with similar proportions. The ivories produced in Byzantium in the tenth century

can be distinguished from those made in earlier centuries by the desire to exploit the maximum width of the tusk, which limited the maximum height that could be achieved because of the tusk’s curvature. In contrast, the consular diptychs of the fifth and sixth centuries sought to extract the maximum height of plaque; as a result, the height to width ratio changed from 2.3:1 to 1.7:1 between these periods of ivory production. Equally, in Umayyad Spain in the 960s and 970s carvers sought to use ivory in a different way, exploiting the circularity of tusks to produce pyxides, a form not found in Byzantium in this period.<sup>47</sup>

This group of ivories should be associated with the patronage of the imperial court in Constantinople. Two ivories explicitly depict a named tenth-century emperor (Constantine, on the Moscow plaque, Romanos and Eudokia on the plaque in the Cabinet des Médailles in Paris: [cat. nos. 9, 10]).<sup>48</sup> Four seek divine intercession for the health of an emperor Constantine (Palazzo Venezia triptych; plaques in Venice, Vienna, and Dresden [cat. nos. 1, 14, 15]), but only one piece identifies its patron definitively, the Cortona reliquary of the True Cross (cat. no. 11).<sup>49</sup> This includes an inscription that names its commissioner as Stephanos, the *skeuophylax* (treasurer) of the Great Church, an imperial appointment, working in the reign of Nikephoros II Phokas (r. 963–969). A further two ivories depict unnamed emperors,<sup>50</sup> as does the Troyes casket, although as none includes inscriptions, it is

43 Ibid., nos. 37 (Dumbarton Oaks), 36 (Gotha), and 60 (Halberstadt).

44 Ibid., nos. 43 (Venice), 54 (private collection), 44 (Vienna), and 45 (Dresden).

45 I. Kalavrezou-Maxeiner, “Eudokia Makrembolitissa and the Romanos Ivory,” *DOP* 31 (1977): 305–25; and the response in A. Cutler, “The Date and Significance of the Romanos Ivory,” in *Byzantine East, Latin West: Art-Historical Studies in Honor of Kurt Weitzmann*, ed. C. Moss and K. Kiefer (Princeton, NJ, 1995), 605–10, reprinted in A. Cutler, *Late Antique and Byzantine Ivory Carving*, Variorum CS617 (Aldershot, 1998), Study 11.

46 GW 2, nos. 40, 41; A. Cutler, *The Hand of the Master: Craftsmanship, Ivory, and Society in Byzantium (9th–11th centuries)* (Princeton, NJ, 1994), 211–20.

47 See the essays in K. von Folsach and J. Meyer, “The Ivories of Muslim Spain,” *Journal of the David Collection* 2, nos. 1 and 2 (2005).

48 In addition, slightly earlier is the ivory scepter or comb of Leo VI now in Berlin: G. Bühl and H. Jehle, “Des Kaisers altes Zepter—des Kaisers neuer Kamm,” *Jahrbuch Preussischer Kulturbesitz* 39 (2002): 289–306; see also K. Corrigan, “The Ivory Scepter of Leo VI: A Statement of Post-Iconoclastic Imperial Ideology,” *ArtB* 60, no. 3 (1978): 407–16.

49 H. A. Klein, “Die Elfenbein-Staurothek von Cortona im Kontext mittelbyzantinischer Kreuzreliquiarproduktion,” in *Spätantike und byzantinische Elfenbeinbildwerke im Diskurs*, ed. G. Bühl, A. Cutler, and A. Effenberger, *Spätantike, frühes Christentum, Byzanz*. Reihe B, Studien und Perspektiven 24 (Wiesbaden, 2008), 167–90; Nelson, “And So, With the Help of God” (n. 4 above), 183–86.

50 K. Weitzmann, *Byzantine and Early Mediaeval Antiquities in the Dumbarton Oaks Collection*, vol. 3, *Ivories and Steatites* (Washington, DC, 1972), no. 25 (DO 47.11); GW 2, no. 37.

unclear whether these images were intended to represent actual or ideal emperors.<sup>51</sup>

Given the iconographic, stylistic, and technical similarities between the ivories, much scholarship has been concerned with establishing the order in which they were made. This implicitly reinforces the idea of central, presumably imperial, control over the imagery on the ivories. It assumes that an original idea or model is disseminated and copied by other ivories. This model of production for the great Deësis ivories was argued against by Adolph Goldschmidt and Kurt Weitzmann in their 1934 catalogue of Byzantine relief ivories, but it has remained pervasive.<sup>52</sup> However, it is possible to show that the idea of original and copy is too reductive a way of viewing the ivories and their relationship. Nevertheless, there is compelling evidence to suggest that the Palazzo Venezia work predates the other examples. However, this does not mean that it can simply be seen as the prototype, as the other triptychs are best viewed as variations on a theme among objects made in parallel rather than in series.

The Palazzo Venezia triptych is undoubtedly the simplest of the three Deësis triptychs in terms of its design and layout and it has the fewest number of saints. In the scene of the Deësis, Christ stands without a throne and no angels accompany him. There is a significant space between him, the Virgin, and St. John the Baptist. More significantly, the ivory shows the least interest in the issue of how to exploit the three-dimensional nature of the object. It was designed to be seen in just two stages: first approached with the doors closed, and then the interior to be viewed with the doors open (cat. no. 1b, 1c). The back of the triptych was never intended to be seen in its own right when open. This is evident from the way in which the names of the saints have been inscribed. When seen open from the

back (cat. no. 1a), the saints on the right are divorced from their names, which were carved on the other door, which now appears at the opposite end of the triptych. Henry Maguire has shown how important it was to name saints in images in the middle Byzantine period.<sup>53</sup> The inscriptions are as much a part of their identity as their facial types, dress, and other attributes.

In contrast, the reverses of both the Vatican and Harbaville triptychs were highly decorated with imagery centered on the cross, which is then established as an object of devotion in its own right (cat. nos. 2 and 3). The exterior could effectively act as the center of a second triptych visible when the doors are open (although we can never know whether this was done in practice). The saints on the exteriors of the doors are not divorced from their names. It seems highly unlikely that an emperor would commission the Palazzo Venezia triptych after the other two, and yet leave it as a one-sided object. It can safely be placed as earliest in date. The other two triptychs should be seen as variations on the themes and iconography that are first encountered on the Palazzo Venezia ivory. However, they cannot be placed in a single chronological sequence. It has been suggested that the Vatican triptych was made second and the Harbaville last, but this relies on a whig-like belief that each triptych “improves” upon the one that precedes it, an argument that is highly subjective, not least in aesthetic terms.<sup>54</sup> The stylistic, compositional, iconographic, and conceptual changes between the two do not represent a consistent development but rather a difference of overall aim.

The changes can be seen in many areas. The most obvious is the number of saints on each triptych. Where inscriptions were placed on the Palazzo Venezia triptych, the later ones were adorned with additional saints in roundels. On the Harbaville triptych, the number is expanded from twenty-one to thirty-two saints (these numbers exclude the figures and angels depicted in the Deësis), and on the Vatican triptych to thirty-four.<sup>55</sup> The two later triptychs both depict

51 A. Goldschmidt and K. Weitzmann, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X–XIII Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1, *Kästen* (Berlin, 1930), no. 122; *Glory of Byzantium*, cat. 141. The David casket in the Palazzo Venezia, Rome, is addressed to an unnamed emperor and empress: A. Cutler and N. Oikonomides, “An Imperial Byzantine Casket and Its Fate at a Humanist’s Hands,” *ArtB* 70, no. 1 (1988): 77–87, reprinted in Cutler, *Late Antique and Byzantine Ivory Carving*, Study 9.

52 GW 2, 17: Vatican as an enriched repetition of the original model; Harbaville as “eine selbständiger gestaltende Wiederholung” (a more independently formed repetition). Contrast *Glory of Byzantium*, cats. 79 and 80; and even Cutler, *Hand of the Master*, 211.

53 H. Maguire, *The Icons of Their Bodies: Saints and Their Images in Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ, 1996), 100–145.

54 Expressed most explicitly by Ioli Kalavrezou in her two entries on these ivories in *Glory of Byzantium*, cats. 79 and 80; see also Cutler, *Hand of the Master*, 210–11.

55 It is noteworthy that this sequence of increasing numbers runs counter to the trend seen in the mosaic churches of the eleventh century, in which the number of individual saints declines.

the warrior saints in military costume, with cuirass, skirt, sword, or spear and shield, instead of the courtly costumes in which they appear on the Palazzo Venezia triptych. Within the Deësis on the Harbaville triptych, Christ now sits on a throne, although the three figures are still widely separated as on the Palazzo Venezia triptych; however, he is now accompanied by the busts of two angels in medallions who hover above the throne. On the Vatican triptych, the angels are fully part of the space of the Deësis, standing behind the throne, the back of which they clasp with one of their hands. These points could be used to argue that the Vatican triptych builds on the imagery of the “previous” two triptychs. On the other hand, the Harbaville triptych is undoubtedly theologically more complex. The inclusion of three Old Testament figures—Jeremiah, Elijah, and Isaiah—on the small carved frieze above the Deësis adds a prophetic and eschatological aspect to the object as a whole.<sup>56</sup> This is not something that is apparent on either of the other triptychs. The inscriptions on the Harbaville triptych have also been carved with more ligatures and abbreviations than in the other two, which Cutler sees as part of a “progressive” sequence.<sup>57</sup>

A more striking difference between the two later triptychs lies in the different visions they present of the cross, which appears on the reverse of the main panel. The decision to carve a cross echoed the simple cross found on the reverse of the Palazzo Venezia triptych and on many icons, where it seems to have had a simple apotropaic function.<sup>58</sup> On the Vatican and Harbaville triptychs, the role of the cross is greatly expanded to present an image of salvation. In each case the cross is presented in relation to the natural world, but the resulting images are strikingly divergent. The cross on the Harbaville triptych is closer in form to that on the

Palazzo Venezia ivory, with its plain, faceted arms and medallion terminals. However, it is now placed in a paradisiacal setting, with the twenty-four stars above (possibly referencing the twenty-four elders of the apocalypse); the two trees, draped in ivy and vines, that lean towards the cross; and the birds, lions, and hare that crouch in the fecund foliage below.<sup>59</sup> The Vatican cross, on the other hand, is transformed into the jeweled cross of heaven. It is closer in form to the gem-encrusted processional crosses that existed in the Byzantine world at this time, such as that donated by Nikephoros II Phokas to the Lavra on Mount Athos, the medallions of which replicate the Deësis on the front of the Vatican triptych, with Christ in the center, John the Baptist to the left, the Virgin to the right, and two archangels at top and bottom (fig. 4).<sup>60</sup> The cross on the Vatican ivory is surrounded by a scrolling vine that is as full of life as the undergrowth around the Harbaville cross. These differences cannot be ascribed straightforwardly to a single developmental sequence. It is not possible to see the three triptychs in terms of original and copy, but only as variants in which the only original is the concept of the ideal heavenly court, not any particular image.

This evidence that the ivories all represent variations on a theme rather than a straightforward linear order is also evident from the other triptychs. The three Crucifixion triptychs certainly do not form a single sequence. Rather, each presents a particular focus on separate but complementary ways of reading and understanding Christ's Passion that are familiar from the many different ways in which it was presented in other media.<sup>61</sup> The Borradaile triptych presents the event as a stripped down icon, in which the viewer is invited to contemplate the body of Christ (cat. no. 4). The invitation comes from the arresting position of St. John's right hand, which addresses the viewer directly. Attention is then transferred by the direction of St. John's head to

See the plans in O. Demus, *Byzantine Mosaic Decoration: Aspects of Monumental Art in Byzantium* (London, 1948); but also the comments in L. James, “Monks, Monastic Art, the Sanctoral Cycle and the Middle Byzantine Church,” in *The Theotokos Evergetis and Eleventh-Century Monasticism*, ed. M. Mullett and A. Kirby, Belfast Byzantine Texts and Translations 6, no. 1 (Belfast, 1994), 162–75.

56 Well explored by Durand and Durand, “À propos du triptyque ‘Harbaville’” (n. 5 above), 140–41.

57 Cutler, *Hand of the Master* (n. 46 above), 211.

58 *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground*, cats. 30, 48, 52, 53; G. Galavaris, *An Eleventh-Century Hexaptych of the Saint Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai*, Hellenic Institute of Byzantine and Post-Byzantine Studies in Venice. Library 29 (Venice and Athens, 2009).

59 Durand and Durand, “À propos du triptyque ‘Harbaville,’” 135–36, 152–53.

60 A. Grabar, “La précieuse croix de la Lavra de Saint-Athanase au Mont Athos,” *CahArch* 19 (1969): 99–104; A. Cutler and J.-M. Spieser, *Byzance Médiévale, 700–1204* (Paris, 1996), fig. 123; Nelson, “And So, With the Help of God,” 179–81.

61 Compare K. Corrigan, “Text and Image on an Icon of the Crucifixion at Mount Sinai,” in *The Sacred Image East and West*, ed. R. B. Ousterhout and L. Brubaker (Urbana and Chicago, 1995), 45–62; M. E. Frazer, “Hades Stabbed by the Cross of Christ,” *Metropolitan Museum of Art Journal* 9 (1974): 153–61.



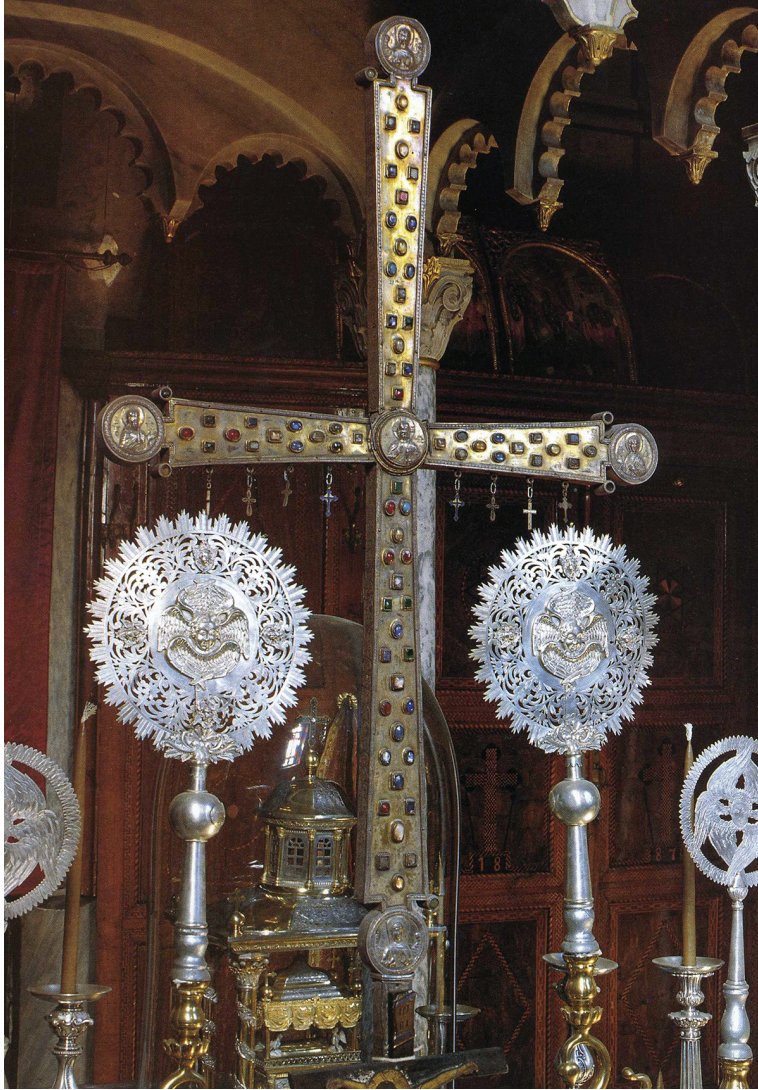


FIG. 4  
Cross of Nikephoros II Phokas,  
Lavra, Mount Athos, 963–69 (after  
A. Cutler and J.-M. Spieser, *Byzance  
Médiévale, 700–1204* [Paris, 1996],  
fig. 123)

the Mother of God, whose own gesture redirects the gaze to the body of Christ. In contrast, the triptych in Berlin focuses on the narrative of the scene, and in particular the humiliation and suffering of Christ just before his death (cat. no. 5). This is witnessed, not just by the crowds who attend with Mary and St. John, but also by most of the figures on the two wings, who (with the exception of St. Helena) direct their gaze to the central event. The palaeography of the inscriptions and the figure style also indicate that this ivory was carved by a different craftsman than the others.

In contrast, the Paris triptych emphasizes the theology of the event, underlined by the short epigram on the lower arm of the cross (cat. no. 6). The appearance of Constantine and Helena on either side of the

cross makes their relationship to the True Cross more direct than it is on the Berlin triptych, where they are placed on the left wing. Notwithstanding the epigram between them that refers to Christ's body, their veneration elides Christ with the cross itself. There are many echoes between this arrangement and that on the ivory reliquary of the True Cross now in Cortona (cat. no. 11), which also seems to blur the distinction between Christ and the True Cross.

Even the most similar looking of ivories can be subtly different, as illustrated by the two ivories of the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia (cat. nos. 7 and 8).<sup>62</sup> At first

62 GW 2, nos. 9, 10; See also *Sinai Byzantium Russia: Orthodox Art from the Sixth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Y. Piatnitsky et al.

sight they are identical, showing Christ enthroned blessing the martyrs below. The depiction of Christ on his throne looks to the enthroned Christ on the Vatican and Harbaville triptychs (although his throne is backless and his gesture more dynamic) (cat. nos. 2 and 3). On the two ivories each martyr adopts the same pose, gesture, and anguished look; his loincloth has the same pattern of drapery folds; and his legs have the same narrow ankles and bulging calf muscle. However, even here there are small variations, which suggest significantly different interpretations of the event. One martyr has moved: the one who appears at the right end of the back row of saints on the Berlin ivory (cat. no. 7) has moved, on the St. Petersburg ivory, to the center of the row, where he raises his hand to praise God, repeating a gesture already created for a martyr just to the right (cat. no. 8). He has abandoned the companion with whom he lamented on the Berlin ivory, who is now left on the St. Petersburg plaque with no one to talk to and incongruously faces out beyond the edge of panel. It is possible that the martyr who has moved is meant to be the new recruit who replaced an apostate soldier, who was lured away from God and the frozen lake by the promise of a hot bath. The back of the apostate appears on the St. Petersburg ivory, where he can be seen diving into the hot water in the bathhouse at the edge of the lake. These two alterations subtly shift the meaning of the scene on the St. Petersburg ivory, emphasizing the narrative of martyrdom and its incidental events over the symbolism of sacrifice and Christ's reward for those who follow him. On the St. Petersburg ivory, this is further accentuated by the size of the martyrs, who have been slightly elongated and now fill half the panel, forcing the artist to reduce the size of Christ. It can also be noted that the St. Petersburg triptych, like the Palazzo Venezia triptych, is a "one-sided" object. When closed, the outside of its doors presents an image of the cross, but this is carved across both doors so that the cross is broken when the doors are opened. Its exterior was clearly not designed to be seen or used when open (cat. no. 8a).<sup>63</sup>

(London, 2000), cat. B.44; A. Effenberger and H. G. Severin, *Das Museum für Spätantike und Byzantinische Kunst Berlin* (Berlin, 1992), cat. 124.

63 The same is true of the cross on the doors of the Sinai Mandylion icon: *Holy Image, Hallowed Ground*, cat. 6.

All these ivories are part of a parallel production of art, in which multiple versions of any particular saint, scene, or event could be made. This is most evident from the group of ivories showing pairs of saints that seem to have been made to form something like a miniature epistyle beam with an extended Deësis.<sup>64</sup> Three ivories from one set survive, with inscriptions seeking prayers for the health of an emperor Constantine (cat. no. 14).<sup>65</sup> A single member of a second set of ivories with identical dimensions, and the same pair of saints and the same prayer, and with only a few changes in composition and spelling, indicates that at least two sets of these ivories were made (cat. no. 15).<sup>66</sup>

Thus, while each set of ivories has broadly the same iconography, individual differences between them indicate different meanings. No ivory simply repeats what already exists. This discussion of variation and serial production leads to a paradox when considering work in ivory. Each ivory must have been carved individually. This was a time-consuming and laborious process that did not easily forgive errors. The small scale of the ivories suggests that they were made for individuals; it is difficult for more than two or three people to look at them at any one time. So it is possible to conclude that they are personal objects, but the question remains: were they personalized objects? Is it possible to

64 K. Weitzmann, "Die byzantinischen Elfenbeine eines bamberger Graduale und ihre ursprüngliche Verwendung," in *Studien zur Buchmalerei und Goldschmiedekunst des Mittelalters: Festschrift für Karl Hermann Usener zum 60. Geburtstag am 19. August 1965*, ed. F. Dettweiler, H. Köllner, and P. A. Riedl (Marburg an der Lahn, 1967), 11–20, has proposed that another 5 plaques with Christ, the Mother of God, the archangel Gabriel, and Sts. Peter and Paul may also have originally formed part of a similar templon-like structure. GW 2, nos. 65–67; Cutler, *Hand of the Master*, 231, offers a critique of such an arrangement.

65 As astutely observed by Kalavrezou in *Glory of Byzantium*, cats. 89, 90; GW 2, cats. 43 (Venice: John, Paul), 54 (Christ), 44 (Vienna: Andrew, Peter).

66 GW 2, cat. 45 (Dresden: John, Paul). Evidence that a pair of ivories, probably from a diptych, with 4 scenes from the Passion of Christ, now divided between Dresden and Hanover (GW 2, cats. 40: Hanover [22.6 × 12.2 cm]; 41: Dresden [22.6 × 12.2 cm]) were also serially replicated, with 1 leaf of a second set of identical size now in St. Petersburg (*Glory of Byzantium*, no. 93 [22.5 × 11.5 cm]), has been called into doubt by A. Cutler, "Carving, Recarving, and Forgery: Working Ivory in the Tenth and Twentieth Centuries," *West 86th* 18, issue 2 (2011), <http://www.west86th.bgc.bard.edu/articles/cutler-carving-ivory.html> (accessed 22 September 2014), who argues that the St. Petersburg ivory is a forgery.

reconcile the individualization of ivories with the idea of a uniform vision of the heavenly court and the model of centralized control that has so often been assumed.<sup>67</sup>

### Patronage and the Choice of Saints

This question is important, because in a search to tie down the great ivory triptychs most questions have centered on patronage. Here scholars have looked in detail at that army of saints that make up this heavenly court, for it includes some very unusual members. Alongside such familiars as St. Peter, St. George, or St. John Chrysostom are more unusual names: St. Agathonikos, St. Akindynos, St. Severianos, and St. James the Persian. These less common saints have been seized upon as a means of understanding the particular mechanics of their commissioning. Either they reveal the identity of the commissioner, or his (or her) purpose. Thus, the very unusual presence of female saints (Anna, Barbara, and Thekla) on the exterior of the wings of the Borradaile triptych (they are the only women on any of these ivories, other than Mary) has been used to argue that the ivory must have had a female patron (Goldschmidt and Weitzmann proposed Anna, the daughter of Romanos II, who was married to Vladimir the Great, the grand prince of Kiev, in 988) (cat. no. 4a).<sup>68</sup> However, St. Anna's presence may be explained in terms of her pairing with Joachim. As the parents of Mary, they act to guide the viewer's attention to the Mother of God as the doors of the triptych are opened, emphasizing her intercessory role. This

leaves Sts. Barbara and Thekla as the most individual and therefore most revealing of the choices of female saints. Goldschmidt and Weitzmann simply say that they were included "to accompany" St. Anna, hinting at the arbitrary nature of their selection of St. Anna as the key to the ivory's patron, beyond the fact that she is in the center of the door.<sup>69</sup>

To deduce a patron from a saint is a difficult task, as the relationship between saint and patron was rarely determined solely by sharing the same name. St. Thekla, for example, appears on only one seal from the tenth century, which was made for an official named Nikephoros.<sup>70</sup> His interest in the saint must have been linked to his position in the hierarchy of the Byzantine state: he was the *proedros* of Seleukeia, where Thekla was buried. Of all the "unusual" saints on the six triptychs, only Thekla and Agathonikos appear on seals, and in each case once only (Agathonikos appears on one of two seals of the *protospatharios* Apelates).<sup>71</sup> It is therefore impossible to establish any kind of direct correspondence between saint and commissioner in this way.

Another approach to the saints has been to use them to determine not the patron of the ivories but their destination. The two saints who appear at the bottom of the wings on the Palazzo Venezia ivory seem to be the "doorkeepers," guarding the points where the worshipper's thumbs and forefingers would grasp the wings before opening them to reveal the court (very similar to the locations of Sts. Barbara and Thekla on the Borradaile triptych). Sts. Severianos and Agathonikos hold this privileged position, and this led to proposals that these are the key figures to understanding the triptych: it must have been made for a church dedicated to Agathonikos (cat. no. 1b).<sup>72</sup> Agathonikos was the leader of a group of five martyrs, including Severianos, Akindynos, Zotikos, Zenon, and Theoprepis, whose feast day was celebrated on 22 August, and Raymond Janin lists three churches

67 The question of serial production and individuality in ivory carving has principally been investigated with regard to ivory and bone boxes: A. Cutler, "'Ehemals Wien': The Pula Casket and the Interpretation of Multiples in Byzantine Bone and Ivory Carving," *Römische historische Mitteilungen* 41 (1999): 117–28; G. Bühl, "Die Regelmässigkeit des Unregelmässigen: Überlegungen zum Herstellungsverfahren der sog. Rosettenkästen," *BZ* 93 (2000): 23–36; U. Koenen, "'Kopien' imaginärer Vorbilder und Reproduktionen: Spätantike, karolingische und byzantinische Elfenbeinwerke im forschungsgeschichtlichen Diskurs," in *Spätantike und byzantinische Elfenbeinbildwerke im Diskurs* (n. 49 above), 191–204; F. Dell'Acqua, "Il mito dell'eroe classico: La 'rinascenza' macedone e la cassetta a rosette di Cava," in *Riforma della Chiesa, esperienze monastiche e poteri locali: La Badia di Cava e le sue dipendenze nel Mezzogiorno dei secoli XI–XII*, ed. M. Galante, G. Vitolo, and G. Z. Zanichelli (Florence, 2014), 339–53.

68 GW 2, no. 38; the more generic link to a female patron receives cautious support from Cutler, *Hand of the Master*, 282 n. 44; Durand and Durand, "À propos du triptyque 'Harbaville'" (n. 5 above), 151.

69 GW 2, no. 38.

70 G. Zacos, *Byzantine Lead Seals* (Basel, 1984), 2:638.

71 V. Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin*, vol. 2, *L'administration centrale* (Paris, 1981), no. 507; compare A.-K. Wassiliou and W. Seibt, *Die byzantinischen Bleisiegel in Österreich*, vol. 2, *Zentral- und Provinzialverwaltung*, Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für Byzantinistik 2.2 (Vienna, 2004), no. 331.

72 Oikonomides, "The Concept of 'Holy War'" (n. 4 above), 71, 77; Cutler, *Hand of the Master*, 235.



dedicated to them in Constantinople.<sup>73</sup> However, there is surely one major problem with this, which is that it is precisely these saints who disappear when the triptych is opened. Although they have an initial importance on the ivory doors, they would no longer be visible to the worshipper praying to Christ and his intimates. Moreover, St. Severianos is one of the two saints who is severed from his name in the process of opening the triptych. As we have seen, the outside of the doors were clearly never meant to be considered when the triptych was opened, and so surely it is unlikely that this would be the place to depict the patron saints of the triptychs. An alternative suggestion proposes that St. Arethas, who does appear on the interior of the triptych, was the saint in whom Constantine VII had a particular interest.<sup>74</sup> Given the number of saints depicted, it is impossible now to identify the “patron” saint.

If individual saints are the key to the Palazzo Venezia triptych, then this presents further problems to the hypothesis that the later triptychs are copies of it. The Vatican triptych, for example, follows the Palazzo Venezia triptych in pairing Sts. Agathonikos with Severianos on the doors. This must lead to two, equally absurd conclusions: either it is just an arid copy of the earlier ivory and that its commissioner took no interest in what was depicted on it, or the churches of St. Agathonikos in Constantinople were filled with Byzantine ivories in the tenth century to the exclusion of all other sites.

If we conceive of these ivories in terms of “original” and “copy,” then the copies are left as meaningless or functionless objects. This is clearly unsatisfactory. Moreover, when we turn to the Harbaville triptych, which “replaced” St. Agathonikos with St. James the Persian, this approach would require us to find a new patron or destination for the object. While churches dedicated to St. James the Persian existed in Constantinople,<sup>75</sup> this would mean that another of these most sumptuous of objects was made for another

of the most obscure small churches of Constantinople. Finally, it can be argued that the size of the ivory triptychs indicates that these precious objects were primarily designed for personal use rather than for public display in a church, in which case seeking a link to a particular church in Constantinople becomes moot. These saints remain key to understanding the objects, but they must be considered in a different way.

The evidence of multiple production of ivories outlined above indicates that ivories were made for a variety of individuals. As a result, we must see these as objects made for wider circulation around and possibly outside the court itself. While some are clearly imperial commissions, or are likely to have been gifts from the emperor to officials, as has plausibly been proposed of the Dumbarton Oaks/Gotha diptych as a codicil of office (cat. no. 12),<sup>76</sup> it is clear that not all originated from this one central figure. The Cortona reliquary shows that the patronage of ivories was not an imperial monopoly; it was a shared endeavor by a number of members of the imperial court. Although the producers probably all came from the higher ranks at court, the objects are outward looking: they were clearly designed to be dispersed. They were made not just for use in the chapels of the Great Palace, but for other private houses, chapels, and monasteries, as confirmed, again, by the Cortona reliquary, which proclaims itself as a gift to the mysterious Eueme monastery dedicated to St. John the Baptist.<sup>77</sup> They therefore formed parts of wider networks that operated at the Byzantine court, involving commissioners and their families, as well as their dependent officials, institutions, and personal churches.<sup>78</sup> As we have seen, to compare the ivories

73 *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae: Propylaeum ad AASS Novembris*, ed. H. Delehaye (Brussels, 1902), 913.35–915.14; R. Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire byzantin*, vol. 1, *Le siège de Constantinople et le patriarcat oecuménique*, pt. 3, *Les églises et les monastères*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1969), 11–13.

74 M. White, *Military Saints in Byzantium and Rus, 900–1200* (Cambridge, 2013), 78–79.

75 Janin, *La géographie ecclésiastique* 1.3:263.

76 Cutler, *Hand of the Master*, 235n35–36; idem, *The Craft of Ivory: Sources, Techniques and Uses in the Mediterranean World AD 200–1400* (Washington, DC, 1985), 53. Compare also the diptych in the cathedral treasury, Halberstadt: GW 2, no. 60.

77 This was identified on the basis of a seal by Oikonomides, “Concept of ‘Holy War,’” 81; Laurent, *Le corpus des sceaux de l'empire byzantin*, 5.2, no. 1285 (he read less than Oikonomides, finding only . . . HMIC for Oikonomides’s Εὐμήμις). A. Guillou, *Recueil des inscriptions grecques médiévales d'Italie*, Collection de l'École Française de Rome 222 (Rome, 1996), no. 15, reads the name on the ivory as Εὐμήθης.

78 For ideas about seeing patronage within broader social groupings, rather than as the actions of individuals, see R. Cormack, “Patronage and New Programs of Byzantine Iconography,” in *17th International Byzantine Congress: Major Papers* (New York, 1986), 609–38; repr. in *The Byzantine Eye*, Variorum Reprints (1988), study X.



FIG. 5  
Reverse of the Archangel  
Michael icon, Treasury of San  
Marco, Venice, tenth century  
(per gentile concessione della  
Procuratoria della Basilica di  
San Marco, Venezia)

Stephen	Polyeuktos	Elijah	Arethas	James the Persian
Christopher		Nicholas		Menas?
Kosmas	John Chrysostom	Basil	Gregory Nazianzos	Damian
Hermolaos				Panteleimon
Kyros		Menas		John
Orestes	Eugenios	Eustratios	Auxentios	Mardarios

Schema of the saints on the reverse of the Archangel Michael icon. Tesoro di San Marco, Venice.





FIG. 6 Detail of the foot of the Sardonyx chalice of Emperor Romanos, showing enamels of Sts. Agathonikos, Akakios, Floros, and Lavros, Treasury of San Marco, Venice, no. 70, tenth century (per gentile concessione della Procuratoria della Basilica di San Marco, Venezia; Cameraphoto Arte—Venezia)

only with each other produces self-evidently contradictory results. However, elements that catch the attention of modern viewers as exceptional on the ivories become more commonplace when seen in a broader context. We must draw a wider net.

### Saints and Cults

If we look at these objects as a part of a network, then the choice of saints takes on a new significance. The “replacement” of St. Agathonikos by St. James the Persian on the Harbaville triptych is not a simple indicator of an individual patron (cat. no. 3a). The saint becomes a link in a chain of objects. St. James appears, for example, also on the exterior of the Borradaile triptych, which previously has attracted attention only to its equally rare female saints, leading it to be linked to a female patron (cat. no. 4a). In other media, St. James the Persian also appears on reverse of the magnificent gold and silver icon of Archangel Michael in the Treasury of San Marco in Venice, which probably also dates to

the mid- or late tenth century (fig. 5).<sup>79</sup> Similarly, Sts. Kyros and John, the relatively unusual pair of doctor saints, who appear on the inside of the wings of the Borradaile triptych (cat. no. 4b), also appear among this same group of saints in medallions on the icon of the archangel Michael.<sup>80</sup>

St. Agathonikos, whom James the Persian “replaced” on the Harbaville triptych, also belongs to a broader group of objects. In addition to the two Deësis triptychs now in Italy on which he guards the doors with St. Severianos (cat. nos. 1b and 2b), he appears on the base of the sardonyx chalice with handles made for emperor Romanos II (959–63), now in the Treasury of San Marco in Venice (fig. 6).<sup>81</sup> His companion mar-

79 *Il Tesoro di San Marco*, vol. 2, *Il Tesoro e il Museo*, ed. H. R. Hahnloser (Florence, 1971), no. 17 (hereafter Hahnloser 2); *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, ed. D. Buckton (Milan, 1984), cat. 12.

80 For Sts. Kyros and John in the liturgy, see F. E. Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western*, vol. 1, *Eastern Liturgies* (Oxford, 1896), 358.

81 Hahnloser 2, no. 42; *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, cat. 10.



FIG. 7

Chalice of the patriarchs, showing enamels of St. Akindynos (bowl) and St Theophylaktos (base), Treasury of San Marco, Venice, no. 69, tenth century (per gentile concessione della Procuratoria della Basilica di San Marco, Venezia; Cameraphoto Arte—Venezia)

tyr, St. Akindynos, can be found on the chalice of the Patriarchs in the same treasury (fig. 7)<sup>82</sup> and on the ivory diptych at Chambéry.<sup>83</sup>

These saints also have overlaps elsewhere; Sts. Kyros and John, Akindynos (along with another of his companions, Elpidophoros) are all also found on the Pala d'Oro in Venice.<sup>84</sup> They make up some of the multitude of small enamels now on the fourteenth-century

frame. These enamels have been linked to the lost first Pala that was commissioned from Constantinople in 976, the same period to which all the great triptychs are dated.<sup>85</sup> A tenth-century date for these enamels would indicate the dissemination of Byzantine court ideas to Venice, even if we cannot be clear whether or how the rituals that accompanied these saints were adopted as well. Finally, these saints are also found in monumental art in churches that have been linked to the Constantinopolitan court: St. Severianos appears in the vault of the new church at Tokalı Kilise in Cappadocia, which has been closely connected to artists

82 Hahnloser 2, no. 40; *The Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, cat. 16.

83 GW 2, no. 222. The dating of this diptych remains controversial. Cutler, *Hand of the Master*, 235. For a twelfth-century date, see C. Jolivet-Lévy, "A New Ivory Diptych and Two Related Pieces," in *Interactions: Artistic Interchange between the Eastern and Western Worlds in the Medieval Period*, ed. C. Hourihane, Index of Christian Art Occasional Papers 9 (Princeton, NJ, 2007), 107–19.

84 H. R. Hahnloser, *Il Tesoro di San Marco*, vol. 1, *La Pala d'Oro* (Florence, 1965), nos. 134, 136, 161.

85 S. Bettini, "Venice, the Pala d'Oro, and Constantinople," in *Treasury of San Marco, Venice*, 39; although W. Volbach, "Gli smalti minori bizantini," in *La Pala d'Oro*, ed. H. R. Hahnloser (Venice, 1994), 44, is more cautious.





FIG. 8 Deësis with Davit Kuropalates and Bagrat (figure of the Theotokos has fallen to the ground), southeast facade of Oshki, Tao-Klarjeti (Georgia), 963–69 (photo © Antony Eastmond)

and patrons from Constantinople;<sup>86</sup> Sts. Kyros, Thekla, Barbara, and Akindynos all appear in the mosaics of the *katholikon* at Hosios Loukas, sometimes linked to the patronage of Basil II, grandson of Constantine VII.<sup>87</sup> (The prominence of St. Akindynos at Hosios Loukas—he appears above the door leading outside from the narthex—may reflect his significance or the pun in his name, meaning safe, safeguard from danger.)

We can look wider still. In addition to the saints that appear on the earliest enamels from the Pala d'Oro in Venice, contemporary evidence shows that the vision

of the heavenly court also moved east. This is most evident at the Georgian church dedicated to St. John the Baptist at Oshki, in the province of Tao-Klarjeti, that ran against Byzantium's eastern frontier in the tenth century.<sup>88</sup> The church was built between 963 and 976 by the brothers Davit and Bagrat Bagrationi. Davit was the great ally of the Phokas family and became the savior of Basil II during the revolt of Bardas Skleros in 976; in return, he was rewarded with the Byzantine court titles of Magistros and then Kouropalates. Throughout the church, the Deësis appears as a regular theme. On the southeast wall Davit and Bagrat are shown taking up the position of the saints on the ivories flanking the

86 A. W. Epstein, *Tokali Kilise: Tenth-Century Metropolitan Art in Byzantine Cappadocia*, DOS 22 (Washington, DC, 1986).

87 M. Chatzidakis, *Hosios Loukas* (Athens, 1996); see now R. Cormack, "Viewing the Mosaics of the Monasteries of Hosios Loukas, Daphni and the Church of Santa Maria Assunta, Torcello," in *New Light on Old Glass: Recent Research on Byzantine Mosaics and Glass*, ed. C. Entwistle and L. James, British Museum Research Publication 179 (London, 2013), 242–53, for review and dating to 1040s.

88 W. Djbadze, *Early Medieval Georgian Monasteries in Historic Tao, Klarjet'i, and Šavšet'i* (Stuttgart, 1992), 92–141; V. Silogava, *Oshki: Tenth-Century Memorial Church* (Tbilisi, 2006), 168–92; N. Thierry, "Le souverain dans les programmes d'églises en Cappadoce et en Géorgie du X<sup>e</sup> au XIII<sup>e</sup> siècles," *Revue des études géorgiennes et caucasiennes* 4 (1988): 127–70.





FIG. 9 Deësis with saints and donor, column in southwest vestibule of Oshki, Tao-Klarjeti (Georgia), 963–69 (photo © Antony Eastmond)

Deësis (fig. 8).<sup>89</sup> If the ivories are objects that invite performance, then Oshki visualizes the nature of that performance as rulers present themselves to Christ through his mother and John the Baptist. The idea of the Deësis is echoed in human and celestial forms throughout the church. A donor, named as Grigol, is

shown kneeling before the Deësis on a column in the southwest vestibule of the church. They are accompanied by Sts. Kosmas and Damianos, St. Symeon Stylites, and St. Nino, the evangelist of Georgia, while angels hover in attendance on the capital above (fig. 9).<sup>90</sup> When the interior of the church was painted in 1036 (after two decades of Byzantine rule in the region), another Deësis-like triptych was added in the south transept of the church, showing the patron Jojik and a now-anonymous cleric on either side of St. John the Baptist.<sup>91</sup> At the neighboring cathedral of Ishkhani, which was also decorated in the 960s, a triptych of royal portraits was added in apparent imitation of the Deësis, along with further range of unusual saints in the dome, including Sts. Konon, Sergios, Phokas, and Menas.<sup>92</sup>

Thus, to look at the ivories in isolation, and so seize upon their apparently unusual aspects to argue patronal invention and intervention, is to miss the point about them. While undoubtedly each object is individual, focusing only on the choice of a particular saint does not reveal or explain that individuality. Rather, it is important to see them as part of a much larger group, all produced within the court circle, and clearly with a closely circumscribed range of interests in particular saints. It is quite possible that the now-anonymous saints on many other ivories, such as the small triptych with the Crucifixion, angels, Sts. Peter and Paul, and two unnamed martyrs in the National Museums on Merseyside, Liverpool, may be linked to those on the great triptychs (fig. 10).<sup>93</sup>

The broad context for the choice and range of saints seen on the ivories and related objects lies in their origins in the territorial expansion of the Byzantine empire in the tenth century. The majority

90 D. Winfield, "Some Early Medieval Figure Sculpture from North East Turkey," *JWarb* 31 (1968): 33–72, esp. 38–57; N. A. Aladashvili, "Vos'migrannaia kolonna iuzhnoi galerei khrama Oshki," *Ars Georgica* 10 (1991): 69–80; L. Z. Khuskivadze, "Oshkis skulpturul 'vedrebata' taviseburebebis shesakheb [On the peculiarities of Sculptural Deësis at Oshki]," *Sakartvelos Sidzveleni [Georgian Antiquities]* 3 (2003): 59–90.

91 Thierry, "A propos des Deësis d'Osk'i," 227–34.

92 E. Taq'aishvili, *Arkheologicheskaia ekspeditsiia 1917—go goda v iuzhnye provintsii Gruzii* (Tbilisi, 1952), 7–31; J.-M. Thierry and N. Thierry, "Peintures du X<sup>e</sup> siècle en Géorgie Méridionale et leurs rapports avec la peinture byzantine d'Asie Mineure," *CahArch* 24 (1975): 73–113, esp. 86–105.

93 M. Gibson, *The Liverpool Ivories* (London, 1994), cat. 17; *GW* 2, no. 155.

89 W. Djobadze, "Four Deësis Themes in the Church of Oški," *OC* 72 (1988): 168–82; N. Thierry, "A propos des Deësis d'Osk'i," *OC* 76 (1992): 227–34.



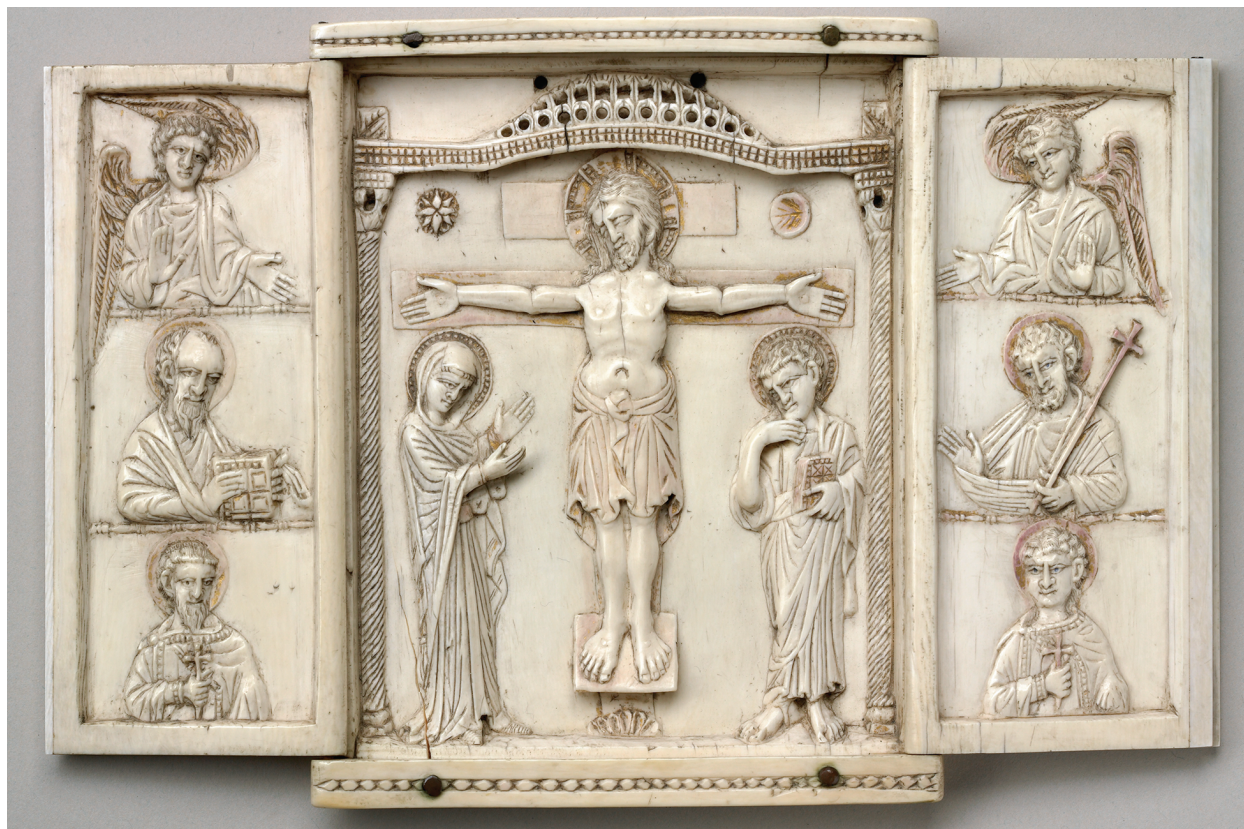


FIG. 10 Ivory triptych with Crucifixion, angels, Sts. Peter and Paul, and two martyrs, National Museums, Liverpool (inv. M8063), tenth century, GW 2, no. 155 (courtesy National, Museums Liverpool)

of the “unusual” saints originated in the eastern provinces of the empire. These were the regions reconquered in the second half of the tenth century as Byzantium sought to regain territories lost in the course of the seventh and eighth centuries. Many of the saints on the triptychs were martyrs in Persia, including Sts. James the Persian<sup>94</sup> and Akindynos (known, along with Sts. Pegasios, Anempodistos, Aphthonios, and Elpidophoros, as the Martyrs of Persia who were tormented during the reign of King Saphur, ca. 350, and commemorated on 2 November; Elpidophoros and Pegasios both appear individually on the Pala d’Oro).<sup>95</sup> Sebasteia was an important city for martyrs, producing the Forty Martyrs celebrated on the Berlin and

St. Petersburg ivories (cat. nos. 7 and 8), along with their leader St. Kyrion (who appears by himself on the Borradaile triptych [cat. no. 4]),<sup>96</sup> St. Blasios,<sup>97</sup> and the Five Martyrs of Sebasteia (Sts. Eustratios, Auxentios, Eugenios, Mardarios, and Orestes). From elsewhere in central Anatolia came St. Clement of Ankyra,<sup>98</sup> while St. Phokas was martyred in the Pontos and St. Thekla was buried in Seleukeia in Isauria. The doctor saints Kyros and John came from Alexandria and Edessa, respectively,<sup>99</sup> and St. Arethas, who appears on all three

94 *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. Delehaye, 259.21–260.24.

95 *Ibid.*, 187.13–190.2; Symeon Metaphrastes, *Menologion* in PG 116: cols. 9–36; Hahnloser, *La Pala d’Oro*, nos. 130, 136.

96 C. Walter, *The Warrior Saints in Byzantine Art and Tradition* (Aldershot, 2003), 170–76.

97 *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. Delehaye, 457.6–26.

98 *Ibid.*, 415.21–18.12; Symeon Metaphrastes, *Menologion* in PG 114:816–93.

99 *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. Delehaye, 433.31–35.20; 775.9–77.4. Symeon Metaphrastes, *Menologion* in PG 114:1232–49; BHG 1:144–45.

of the great Deësis triptychs, was martyred in Arabia and possibly had his relics taken to Syria.<sup>100</sup> Even St. Agathonikos, who had been martyred in Selymbria on the Sea of Marmara to the west of Constantinople, is recorded in the *Synaxarion of Constantinople* as having his synaxis celebrated in Kainopolis, a city located in the Nile Delta according to the Madaba map.<sup>101</sup> These were the new court saints of the tenth century, who were invented—or rather reinvented—to suit the new triumphalism of the empire.

There is ample evidence of the interest of the Byzantine court in the relics to be won in the East. Chronicles tend to concentrate on the most famous: those relics linked to Christ and his intimates. Romanos I received the Mandylion from Edessa in Constantinople in 944 (although later Constantine VII wrote himself into its history);<sup>102</sup> and a few years later Nikephoros II Phokas recovered the Keramion from the same city. During the eastern campaigns, the sandals of Christ and the hair of John the Baptist were rescued from Memptze (ancient Hierapolis), and the blood that miraculously issued from an icon of Christ was found in Berytos.<sup>103</sup> Constantine VII presided over the translation of the relics of St. Gregory of Nazianzos from Cappadocia to the church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople.<sup>104</sup> The court saints on the triptychs should be seen as part of this phenomenon.

They are less well recorded, but their cults were revived in Constantinople in the tenth century and were celebrated in the *Synaxarion* of the Great Church. Their appearance on so many of these objects tells of the common purpose and interests of the Byzantine court in the tenth century. It is striking that those saints whose cults were already established in the city, such as Sts. Agathonikos and Thekla, were those associated in tenth-century accounts of the city with Constantine the Great.<sup>105</sup> They may, therefore, also have formed part of the parallel campaign by the Macedonian emperors to bolster their legitimacy by association with the first ruler of the city, something that could equally be applied to the presence of Constantine and Helena at Çavuşin and on a number of the ivories discussed here (cat. nos. 5, 6, and 11).<sup>106</sup>

However, the evidence for the renewed interest in these saints is inconsistent. They appear only sporadically across the range of objects discussed in this paper. There appears to be no coherent pattern underlying the objects on which they appear, and certainly no concerted “campaign” to promote particular saints. Even more worrying, some do not even appear in the *Menologion* of Symeon Metaphrastes, usually regarded as the great imperial codification of saints in the Byzantine world: he gives no life of St. Agathonikos or St. James the Persian.<sup>107</sup> However, it is possible to make a virtue of this inconsistency, which then becomes cen-

100 *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. Delehay, 259.21–60.24; Symeon Metaphrastes, *Menologion* in PG 115:1249–89. I. Shahid, “Byzantium in South Arabia,” *DOP* 33 (1979): 23–94, at 69–73; Walter, *Warrior Saints*, 195–99.

101 *Synaxarium ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae*, ed. Delehay, 913.35–15.14; E. Allia, “The Legends of the Madaba Map,” in *The Madaba Map Centenary 1897–1997*, ed. M. Piccirillo and E. Allia, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum: Collectio Maior 40 (Jerusalem, 1999), 47–101, at 101; G. W. Bowersock, *Mosaics as History: The Near East from Late Antiquity to Islam*, Revealing Antiquity 16 (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2007), 26; although A. Berger, “Streets and Public Spaces in Constantinople,” *DOP* 54 (2000): fig. 4, marks a Kainopolis church in Constantinople.

102 “Narratio de imagine edessena,” §47, in *Doctrina Addai. De imagine edessena. Die Abgar- legende. Das Christusbild von Edessa*, ed. and trans. M. Illert, *Fontes Christiani* 45 (Turnhout, 2007).

103 Leo the Deacon, *Leonis diaconi Calvënis Historiae libri decem*, ed. C. B. Hase (Bonn, 1828), 70–71, 165–66, 166–67; trans. A.-M. Talbot and D. F. Sullivan, *The History of Leo the Deacon: Byzantine Military Expansion in the Tenth Century*, DOS 41 (Washington, DC, 2005), 121, 207–8, 209–10.

104 B. Flusin, “L’empereur et le Théologien: À propos du retour des reliques de Grégoire de Nazianze (BHG 728),” in *AETOS*:

*Studies in Honour of Cyril Mango Presented to Him on April 14, 1998*, ed. I. Ševčenko and I. Hutter (Stuttgart and Leipzig, 1998), 137–53.

105 St. Agathonikos: *Accounts of Medieval Constantinople: The Patria*, ed. and trans. A. Berger, DOML 24 (Cambridge, MA, and London, 2013), 1.50, 3.1, 4.1, records that Constantine the Great first built a church to St. Agathonikos, and that it was repaired by Anastasios and rebuilt by Justinian (2.107). This is confirmed by Procopius, *Opera omnia*, vol. 4, *Peri ktismaton libri 6*, ed. J. Haury and G. Wirth, *Bibliotheca scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana, scriptores Graeci* (Leipzig, 1964), 1.4.30. St. Thekla: *The Patria*, 2.66 (although 3.35 suggests that the church was only renamed in honor of St. Thekla by Justin II [565–78]). H. Delehay, *Les origines du culte des martyrs*, 2nd ed. (Paris, 1933), 237.

106 A. Markopoulos, “Constantine the Great in Macedonian Historiography: Models and Approaches,” in *New Constantines: The Rhythm of Imperial Renewal in Byzantium, 4th–13th Centuries*, ed. P. Magdalino, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies. Publications 2 (Aldershot, 1994), 174–70.

107 The manuscript used in PG does not include James the Persian. However, H. Delehay, “Notes sur un Manuscrit Grec du Musée Britannique,” *AB* 25 (1906): 496 n. 1, mentions that James is included in an unpublished manuscript, identified as the text of Metaphrastes.



tral to understanding all these objects. The range of saints reveals the diversity of the court but also the clear overall structure within which everyone operated. The ivories are all similar, but with endless minor variations. It is at this point that we can return to broader questions of ceremonial and ritual, that grand background to the Byzantine tenth century.

### Social Structure and Ceremony

First, to reiterate, the ivory triptychs with the Deësis provide a synopsis of Byzantine court hierarchies and ceremonies. They present a visualization of its eternal, idealized form. The design of the triptychs and organization of saints into groups establishes the court's hierarchical structure, and the form of the object reflects the revelatory element of processions through the opening and closing of the doors. However, the relationship between the ivories and ceremonial is more important and more instructive. It reveals a court that shared a core of beliefs about the ways in which heavenly and earthly society was structured, but shows that this was neither centrally controlled nor monolithic. It was an image of the court that varied from individual to individual and from object to object. Just as the ivories were dispersed and constantly changed in every iteration in which they appeared, so, too, was Byzantine ceremonial. It was determined and developed by all the different men and women that were involved in it, and the *Book of Ceremonies* records many recent alterations to rituals, such as the two different versions of the ceremony for the enthronement of a patriarch in book two or the alterations made by Basil I to the ceremony of the cutting of his son Leo's hair.<sup>108</sup> The *Book of Ceremonies* was not a prescriptive text but a reference to record events for posterity and for consultation in case of uncertainty.<sup>109</sup> Like the rituals surrounding modern weddings, notional rules exist, but they do not need to be followed. They are usually

invoked only when something goes wrong, and so they provide a mechanism to determine who is at fault in case of problems.

The ivories also remind us that ceremonial was not simply a great public event, but rather something that was disseminated throughout layers of society and that could be projected through objects. The objects took the rituals out of the public spaces of the Great Palace, the Great Church, and the major processional stops along the Mese and introduced them into the private spaces of the home or smaller, private chapels. By this means, they dispersed ideas of the court. This reinforced Byzantine ideas of *taxis* and social structure but simultaneously also constantly undermined or, at least, altered those ideas as they appeared in a slightly different guise on every occasion. There could be no monolithic ceremonial in such circumstances. This echoes Philippe Buc's view of ritual in historical sources.<sup>110</sup> He argues that accounts of rituals are never unbiased but represent a series of contested interpretations of the events described in order to promote particular political views. I argue that ivories acted similarly, although not in such a consciously political way. The variations between the ivories were not part of an attempt by rivals to appropriate ceremony to their own ends; rather, they were the inevitable result of the fragmented viewing and understanding of ritual in a world in which central control was a fiction based on a desire to replicate the heavenly court in its earthly counterpart. Just as Byzantine ceremonies were seen by every individual differently (depending on rank, access to the emperor, position in processions, placement at banquets, etc.), so, too, the great ivories represent different views of the heavenly court. They are evidence of the dispersal of ritual in its informal manifestation, spread among the elite. They also remind us that ceremonial was not simply conducted according to long tradition; it was constantly innovating. In the same way, the ivories seem to be new creations of the mid-tenth century to facilitate personal spirituality but seem to have fallen into disfavor within a generation or two: there are no similar works of art from the eleventh

108 Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 2.14 and 2.38 (ordination of the patriarch), 2.23 (cutting the hair of the emperor's son); Dagron, *Emperor and Priest*, 84–114; A. Cameron, "The Construction of Court Ritual: The Byzantine Book of Ceremonies," in *Rituals of Royalty: Power and Ceremonial in Traditional Societies*, ed. D. Cannadine and S. R. F. Price (Cambridge, 1987), 106–36.

109 Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 1. Preface.

110 P. Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual: Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, NJ, 2001), esp. chap. 2. See also G. Koziol, "Review Article: The Dangers of Polemic: Is Ritual Still an Interesting Topic of Historical Study?" *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002): 367–88.

or twelfth centuries. This exactly fits our understanding of the *Book of Ceremonies*, which was more a record of recent practice than an abstract set of formulae and protocols.<sup>111</sup>

## Conclusions

The court saints on the great ivory triptychs are compiled from fragments of ceremonial, put together according to individual desire and interest rather than central control. As Ihor Ševčenko noted during the failed 1991 coup in Russia, Byzantium wanted to be totalitarian but never had the means to achieve this.<sup>112</sup> This desire was defeated from within the court. Many individuals in privileged positions each had his or her own view of the court, and each commissioned slight, but endless variations of it in art, which reflected their own desires and interests. To understand Byzantine ceremonial it is necessary to put all the objects back together to see a world that presented itself as an imperial monolith but was actually a much more varied and less controlled society. The material evidence shows

the transfer of imperial ideas into the homes and personal churches of the city and empire. Ceremonial was something that was present for the elite at all levels of their lives: something to be lived through. The court of saints was the network that linked the objects together. So rather than see ceremonial as a thing, we should see it as a process, with a shared grammar but no single “author.” Rather, the ivories show the tensions between personal devotion and the corporate nature of the Constantinopolitan court. On the one hand, the overall network of saints and similarities among the objects supports Émile Durkheim’s idea of ceremony as a means to foster cohesion and thereby establish consensus,<sup>113</sup> but at the same time the differences between them show the impossibility of achieving this through ceremony and its representations.<sup>114</sup>

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111 See, for example, Constantine VII Porphyrogenetos, *The Book of Ceremonies*, 2.19, which seems to have been based on the ritual humiliation of Abu’l ‘Asha’ir, cousin of Abu Sayf, in 957: McCormick, *Eternal Victory*, 160–61.

112 I. Ševčenko, “Was There Totalitarianism in Byzantium? Constantinople’s Control over Its Asiatic Hinterland in the Early Ninth Century,” in *Constantinople and Its Hinterland*, ed. C. Mango and G. Dagron, Society for the Promotion of Byzantine Studies. Publications 3 (Aldershot, 1995), 91–105.

113 É. Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, ed. C. Cosman and M. S. Cladis (Oxford, 2008); C. M. Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice* (Oxford, 1992), 171–81.

114 C. Pössel, “The Magic of Early Medieval Ritual,” *Early Medieval Europe* 17, no. 2 (2009): 111–25; G. Koziol, *Begging Pardon and Favor: Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca, 1992), 307: “ritual cannot make a weak ruler strong or create consensus where there was none.”

# Catalogue of Ivories

- I. Ivory Triptych with the Deësis (GW 2, no. 31).  
Palazzo Venezia, Rome. Tenth century.  
Size when open: 236 × 287 mm.  
A. Exterior, doors open.  
B. Exterior, doors closed.  
C. Interior, doors open.

Photos: After GW 2, pl. X (B); © Soprintendenza Speciale per il Patrimonio Storico Artistico ed Etnoantropologico e per il Polo Museale della Città di Roma. Archivio Fotografico (A, C).



A



B

## Ivory I.B—Exterior (doors closed)

LEFT DOOR (when closed)		RIGHT DOOR (when closed)	
Ⓐ Β[ΑCΙ]ΛΕΙΟC Basil	Ⓐ ΓΡΗΓΟΡ/Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟC Gregory the Theologian	Ⓐ ΙΩΑΝΝΗC Ο ΧΡΥCΟCΤ/ John Chrysostom	Ⓐ ΚΛΗΜΗC ΑΓΚΥΡΑC Klement of Ankyra
ΜΑΡΤΥC CΥΝΑΦΘΕΙC ΕΝ ΤΡΙCΙ ΘΥΝΠΟΛΟΙC : ΠΙCΤΟΙC ΤΟ ΤΡΙΤΟΝ ΕΥΜΕΝΙΖΕΤΑΙ CΕΒΑC : Μάρτυρ συναφθείς ἐν τρισὶ θυηπόλοις Πιcτοῖc τὸ τρίττον εὐμενίζεται σέβας The martyr allied with the three bishops Commends the object of triple reverence to the faithful		ΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΙC ΤΡΕΙC ΕΙC ΜΕCΙΤΕΙΑΝ ΜΙΑΝ : ΚΑΙ ΜΑΡΤΥC ΕCΤΙ ΓΗΝ ΥΠΟΚΛΙΝΕΙΝ CΤΕΦΕΙ : Ἀρχιερεῖc τρεῖc εἰc μεcιτεῖαν μίαν καὶ μάρτυρ ἐcτί, γῆν ὑποκλίνειν cτέφει Three Bishops and a martyr with them, Mediate in view of one [purpose], to submit the earth to the crown	
Ⓐ ΓΡΗΓΟΡ/Ο ΘΑΥΜΑΤ/ Gregory Thaumaturge	Ⓐ CΕΒΗΡΙΑΝΟC Severianos	Ⓐ ΑΓΑΘΟΝΙΚΟC Agathonikos	Ⓐ ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟC Nicholas





C

## Ivory I. C—Interior

LEFT WING		CENTER			RIGHT WING	
Ⓐ ΘΕΟΔΩΡ· Ο ΤΗΡΩΝ Theodore Tiron	Ⓐ ...C [Eustathios]*	Ⓐ ἸΩ· Ο ΠΡΑ· St John the Baptist	ἸϞ ΧϚ Jesus Christ	ΜΗΘΩ Mother of God	Ⓐ ΘΕΟΔΩΡ· Ο ΣΤΡ· ΑΤΗΛΑΤ Theodore Stratilates	Ⓐ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ George
<p>ΑΝΑΞ Ο ΤΕΥΞΑΣ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΩΝ ΤΗΝ ΤΕΤΡΑΔΑ : ΤΟΥΤΟΙΣ ΤΡΟΠΟΝΤΑΙ ΔΥΣΜΕΝΕΙΣ ΚΑΤΑΚΡΑΤ·</p> <p>Ἄναξ ὁ τεύξας μαρτύρων τὴν τετράδα τούτοις τροποῦται δυσμενεῖς κατὰ κράτος</p> <p>An emperor had the four martyrs sculpted; With them he puts to flight the enemies by storm</p>		<p>Ὡς ἦΠΟΡΕΙ ΧΕΙΡ ΚΑΙ ΓΛΥΦΙΣ ΧΥ ΤΥΠΩ · ΧϚ ΔΙΔΑΣΚΩΝ ΚΑΙ ΠΝΟΗΝ ΕΙΣΦΕΡΩ · ΚΑΙ ΣΥΛΛΑΛΕΙ ΓΑΡ ΜῆΡΙ Κ· ΤΩ ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΩ · Κ· ΤΟΥΣ ΜΑΘΗΤΑΣ ὩΣΠΕΡ ΕΚΠΕΜῆ ΛΕΓΕΙ· ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝ· ΛΥΤΡΟΥΣΘΕ ΠΑΝΤΟΙΩΝ ΝΟϚ· ΕΓΩ ΔΕ ΤΟΥΤΩ ΠΑΝ ὙΠΟΣΤΡΩϚΩ ΚΕΡΑΣ·</p> <p>Ὡς ἡπόρει χεῖρ καὶ γλυφίς Χριστοῦ τύπῳ Χριστὸς διδάσκων καὶ πνοὴν εἰσφέρων καὶ συλλαλεῖ γὰρ μητρὶ καὶ τῷ Προδρόμῳ καὶ τοὺς μαθητὰς ὥσπερ ἐκπέμπων λέγει Κωνσταντῖνον λυτροῦσθε παντοίων νόσων ἐγὼ δὲ τοῦτῳ πᾶν ὑποστρώσω κέρας</p> <p>While the hand and the chisel were at a loss trying to represent Christ Christ was teaching and giving breath [to the images]; He speaks to his mother and to the Forerunner And as if he was sending out his disciples, he says: Release Constantine from all illness, And I will subject to him all powers</p>			<p>ἸΔΟΝ ΠΑΡΕΣΤΙΝ Η ΤΕΤΡΑΚΤΥΣ ΜΑΡΤΥΡΩΝ : ΤΩΝ ΑΡΕΤΩΝ ΚΟΣΜΟΝ· ΤΕΤΡΑΔΙ ΣΤΕΦΟΣ :</p> <p>Ἰδοὺ παρέστιν ἡ τετρακτὺς μαρτύρων τῶν ἀρετῶν κοσμοῦσα τετράδι στέφος</p> <p>Here is the foursome of the martyrs Who decorate the crown with the four virtues</p>	
Ⓐ ΠΡΟΚΟΠΙΟΣ Prokopios	Ⓐ ΑΡΕΘΑΣ Arethas	Ⓐ ἸΑΚΩΒΟΣ James	Ⓐ ἸΩ· Ο ΘΕΟΛ· John the Theologian	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ Peter	Ⓐ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ Paul	Ⓐ ΑΝΔΡΕΑΣ Andrew
					Ⓐ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΗΟΣ Demetrios	Ⓐ ΕΥΣΤΡΑΤΙΟΣ Eustratios

\* Inscription lost. Reinstated as Eustathios here because of his presence in this location on the Harbaville Triptych



2. Ivory Triptych with the Deësis  
(GW 2, no. 32).

Museo Sacro, Vatican City (inv. 2441).  
Tenth century.

Size when open: 267 × 336 mm.

- A. Exterior, doors open.
- B. Exterior, doors closed.
- C. Interior, doors open.

Photos: Foto Servizio Fotografico Musei Vaticani.  
Foto © Musei Vaticani.



Ivory 2.B—Exterior (doors closed)

LEFT DOOR		RIGHT DOOR	
[Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΒΑ]ΣΙΛΕΙΟΣ Basil	[Θ ΓΡΙΓ]ΟΡ· Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓ/ Gregory the Theologian	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ἸΩ· Ο ΧΡΥΣΟΣΤ/ John Chrysostom	Θ ΚΛΗΜΗΣ ΑΓΚΥΡΑΣ Klement of Ankyra
Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΦΩΚΑΣ Phokas	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΒΛΑΣΙΟΣ Blasios	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΚΟΣΜΑΣ Kosmas	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΔΑΜΙΑΝΟΣ Damian
Θ ΓΡΗΓΟΡ· Ο ΘΑΥΜΑΤ/ Gregory Thaumaturge	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΣΕΥΗΡΙΑΝΟΣ Severianos	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΓΑΘΟΝΙΚΟΣ Agathonikos	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΝΙΚΟΛΑΕ Nicholas





C

Ivory 2.C—Interior

LEFT WING		CENTER					RIGHT WING	
[Θ] ΘΕΟΔΩΡ [ΤΗΡ]ΩΝ Theodore Tiron	[Eustathios?]	[Deësis]					Θ ΘΕΟΔΩΡ· Ο ΣΤΡΑΤΗΛ· Theodore Stratilates	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ George
Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΜΕΡΚΟΥΡ· Mercurios	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΣΤΕΦ· Stephen	Θ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΣ Philip	Θ ΛΟΥΚΑΣ Luke	Θ ΜΑΤΘ Matthew	Θ ΜΑΡΚΟΣ Mark	Θ ΘΩΜΑΣ Thomas	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΠΑΝΤΕΛΕ· Panteleimon	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΜΗΝΑΣ Menas
Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΡΕΘΑΣ Arethas	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΠΡΟΚΟΠΙΟΣ Prokopios	Θ ΊΑΚΩΒΟΣ James	Θ ἸΩ· Ο ΘΕΟΛ· John the Theologian	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ Peter	Θ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ Paul	Θ ΑΝΔΡΕΑΣ Andrew	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΔΗΜΗΤΡ· Demetrios	Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΕΥΣΤΡΑΤΙΟΣ Eustratios



3. Ivory Triptych with the Deësis  
(Harbaville Triptych; GW 2, no. 33).

Musée du Louvre, Paris (OA3247).

Tenth century.

Size when open: 240 × 278 mm.

A. Exterior, doors open.

B. Exterior, doors closed.

C. Interior, doors open.

Photos: © Antony Eastmond (B); © RMN-Grand Palais (Musée du Louvre)/Daniel Arnaudet (A, C).



A



B

**Ivory 3.B—Exterior (doors closed)**

LEFT DOOR		RIGHT DOOR	
Ⓐ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΣ Basil	Ⓐ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙΟΣ Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΣ Gregory the Theologian	Ⓐ ἸΩ Ο Ϟ John Chrysostom	Ⓐ ΚΛΗΜΕΙΣ ΑΓΚΥΡΑΣ Klement of Ankyra
Ⓐ ΦΩΚΑΣ Phokas	Ⓐ ΒΛΑΣΙΟΣ Blasios	Ⓐ ΚΟΣΜ Kosmas	Ⓐ ΔΑΜΙΑΝ Damian
Ⓐ ΝΙΚΟΛΑ Nicholas	Ⓐ ΣΕΥΗΡΙΑΝΟΣ Severianos	Ⓐ ἸΑΚΩΒΕ Ο ΠΕΡΧΗΣ James the Persian	Ⓐ ΓΡΗΓΟΡΙ Ο ΘΑΥΜΑΤ Gregory Thaumaturge





Ivory 3.C—Interior

LEFT WING		ἸΕΡΕΜΙ Jeremiah		Θ ΗΛΙΑΣ Isaias		ἸΣΑΪΑΣ Isaiah		RIGHT WING	
Θ ΘΕΟΔΩΡ/ Ο ΤΗΡ/ Theodore Tiron	Θ ΘΕΟΔΩΡ/ Ο ΦΡΑΤΗΛΑΤⁱ Theodore Stratilates	Θ ἸΩ Ο ΠΑΔΡΟΜΟΣ St John the Baptist		ἸϞ ΧϞ Jesus Christ		ΜΡ ΘΥ Mother of God		Θ ΓΕΩΡΓΙ/ George	Θ ΕΥΣΤΑΘΙ/ Eustathios
Θ ΜΕΡΚΥΡ/ Mercurios	Θ ΘΩΜΑ/ Thomas							Θ ΦΙΛΙΠΠΟΣ Philip	Θ ΠΑΝΤΕΛ/ Panteleimon
Θ ΕΥΦΡΑΤΙ/ Eustratios	Θ ΑΡΕΘ/ Arethas	Θ ἸΑΚΩ/ James	Θ ἸΩ Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΣ John the Theologian	Θ ΠΕΤΡΕ Peter	Θ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ Paul	Θ ΑΝΔΡΕΑΣ Andrew		Θ ΔΗΜΗΤΡΙΕ Demetrios	Θ ΠΡΟΚΟΠΙΟΣ Prokopios

4. Ivory Triptych with the Crucifixion  
(Borradaile Triptych; GW 2, no. 38).  
British Museum, London (1923,1205.1).  
Tenth century.  
Size when open: 272 × 320 mm.  
A. Exterior, doors closed.  
B. Interior, doors open.  
Photos: © The Trustees of the British Museum.



A

Ivory 4.A— Exterior (doors closed)

LEFT DOOR (WHEN CLOSED)	RIGHT DOOR (WHEN CLOSED)
Ⲑ ΒΑCΙΛΕΙ/ Basil	Ⲑ ἸΑΚΩ/ Ο ΠΕΡ/ James the Persian
ἸϢ ΧϢ ΝΙΚΑ Jesus Christ Conquers	ἸϢ ΧϢ ΝΙΚΑ Jesus Christ Conquers
Ⲑ ΙΩΑΚΕΙΜ Joachim	Η ΑΓΗΑ ΑΝΝΑ Anna
Η ΑΓΗΑ ΒΑΡΒΑ/ Barbara	Η ΑΓΗΑ ΘΕΚΛ/ Thekla





B

Ivory 4.B—Interior

LEFT WING		CENTER		RIGHT WING	
Ⓐ ΚΥΡΟΣ Kyros		[Crucifixion] ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ Michael Gabriel		Ⓐ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ John	
Ⓐ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ George	Ⓐ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ ΣΤΡΑΤΙΛΑΤΗΣ Theodore Stratilates	ΙΔΕΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΥΙΟΥ Behold thy son	ΙΔΕΟΥ ΤΗΣ ΜΗΤΕΡΟΣ Behold thy mother	Ⓐ ΕΥΣΤΑΘΙΟΣ Eustathios	Ⓐ ΚΛΗΜΕΝΤΗΣ ΑΝΚΥΡΑΝΟΥ Klement Ankyra
Ⓐ ΜΗΝΑΣ Menas	Ⓐ ΠΡΟΚΟΠΙΟΣ Prokopios			Ⓐ ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ Stephen	Ⓐ ΚΥΡΙΟΝ Kyrion



## 5. Ivory Triptych with the Crucifixion (GW 2, no. 72).

Museum für byzantinische Kunst, Bode-Museum,  
Berlin (inv. 1578). Tenth century.

Size when open: 233 × 283 mm.

A. Exterior, doors closed.

B. Interior, doors open.

Photos: bpk/Skulpturensammlung und Museum für  
Byzantinische Kunst, SMB/Jürgen Liepe.



## Ivory 5.B— Interior

LEFT WING		CENTER	RIGHT WING	
Ⓐ ΘΩΜΑΣ Thomas	Ⓐ ΑΝΔΡΕΑΣ Andrew	[Crucifixion] ΙC ΧC ΗΡ ΘΥ Ⓐ ΙΩΑΝC	Ⓐ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ Peter	Ⓐ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ Paul
Ⓐ ΚΩΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΣ Constantine	Η ΑΓΙ ΕΛΕΝΗ Helena		Ⓐ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΟΣ Basil	Ⓐ ΤΩ Ο ΧΡΥΣΟΣΤΟΜΟΣ Chrysostom

6. Ivory Triptych with the  
Crucifixion (GW 2, no. 39).  
Cabinet des Médailles, Paris  
(inv. 4651). Tenth century.  
Size when open: 252 × 285 mm.

A. Exterior, doors closed.  
B. Interior, doors open.

Photos: © BNF.



A



B

#### Ivory 6.B— Exterior

Both doors have the following around the the arms of the cross:

ΤC ΧC ΝΙΚΑ

Jesus Christ Conquers

#### Interior

LEFT WING	CENTER	RIGHT WING
Ⓢ ΤΩ Ο ΠΡΟΔΡ <sup>Ο</sup> John the Baptist	[Crucifixion]	Ⓢ ΗΛΙΑC Elijah
Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΠΑΥΛΟC Paul	ΤC ΧC Ο ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥC ΤΗC ΔΟΞΗC Jesus Christ, King of Glory	Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΠΕΤΡΟC Peter
Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟC Stephen	ΜΙΧΑΗΛ ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ Michael Gabriel	Ⓢ ΠΑΝΤΕΛΕΗΜΩΝ Panteleimon
Ⓢ ΤΩ Ο ΧΡΥCΟCΤΟΜ <sup>Ο</sup> John Chrysostom	ΙΔΕΟΥCCE ΙΔΕΗΜPCCE Ἴδε ὁ υἱός σου Ἴδου ἡ μήτηρ σου Behold thy son Behold thy mother	Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟC Nicholas
Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΚΟΣΜΑC Kosmas	Ⓢ ΚΩΝCΤΑΝΤΙΝΟC Η ΑΓΙΑ ΕΛΕΝΙ Constantine & Helena	Ο ΑΓΙΟC ΔΑΜΙΑΝΟC Damian

Epigram on the cross:

† ΩC CΑΡΞ ΠΕΠΟΝΘΑC ΩC ΘC ΠΑΘΩΝ ΛΥΕΙC  
As a body you suffered, as a God of suffering you redeem



7. Ivory plaque with the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia (GW 2, no. 10).  
 Museum für byzantinische Kunst, Bode-Museum, Berlin (inv. 574). Tenth century.  
 Size: 176 × 128 mm.  
 Photo: bpk/Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, SMB/Jürgen Liepe.



Ivory 7.

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ΙC ΧC  
 Jesus Christ

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ΟΙ ἍΓΙΟΙ ΤΕΣΣΑΡΑΚΟΝΤΑ  
 The Holy Forty

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8. Ivory Triptych with the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia (GW 2, no. 9).  
State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg (Ω-299). Tenth century.  
Size when open: 187 × 239 mm.

A. Interior, doors open. B. Exterior, doors closed.

Photos: © State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg. Images courtesy Yuri Piatnitsky.



Ivory 8.B—Interior

LEFT WING		CENTER	RIGHT WING	
Ⓐ ΓΕΩΡΓΙΟΣ George	Ⓐ ΘΕΟΔΩΡΟΣ Theodore	ΟΙ ΑΓΙΟΙ ΤΕΣΑΡΑΚΟΝΤΑ The Holy Forty	Theodore Stratilates	Ⓐ ΕΥΚΤΡΑΤΙΟΣ Eustratios
Demetrios	Ⓐ ΜΕΡΚΥΡΙΟΣ Merkurios		Eustathios	Prokopios

\*The identifications here follow *Sinai Byzantium Russia: Orthodox Art from the Sixth to the Twentieth Century*, ed. Y. Piatnitsky, O. Baddeley, E. Brunner, and M. M. Mango, (London, 2000), cat. B44, for the inscriptions that cannot be read.





9. Ivory plaque with Emperor Constantine crowned by Christ (GW 2, no. 35).

Pushkin Museum, Moscow (inv. P2 b.329). Tenth century.

Size: 189 × 93 mm.

Photo: Fine Art Images/Heritage Images/Scala, Florence.



**Ivory 9.**

ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΣ ΕΝ ΘΩ ΑΥΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ  
Constantine in God Autocrator [and] Emperor of the Romans

ΙC ΧC  
Jesus Christ

10. Ivory plaque with Emperor Romanos and Empress Eudokia crowned by Christ (GW 2, no. 34).

Cabinet des Médailles, Paris (inv. 300).

Tenth century.

Size: 244 × 154 mm.

Photo: © BNF.



**Ivory 10.**

ΙC ΧC  
Jesus Christ

ΡΩΜΑΝΟC ΒΑCΙΛΕΥC ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ  
Romanos, Emperor of the Romans

ΕΥΔΟΚΙΑ ΒΑCΙΛΙC ΡΩΜΑΙΩΝ  
Eudokia, Empress of the Romans



11. Ivory reliquary of the True Cross  
(GW 2, no. 77).

S. Francesco, Cortona. 963–69.

Size: 302 × 145 mm.

A. Front.

B. Back.

Photos: The Art Archive/Diocesan Museum  
Cortona Italy/Gianni Dagli Orti.



A

Ivory 11.A — Front

MIXAHΛ Michael	ΙC ΧC Jesus Christ	ΓΑΒΡΙΗΛ Gabriel
ΜΡ ΘΥ Theotokos		ΘΙΩ Ο ΠΡΟΔΡΟΜΟΣ Prodromos
[Cross]		
Θ ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ Stephen		ΘΙΩ Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓΟΣ John Theologian
Η ΑΓΙΑ ΕΛΕΝΗ Helena	Θ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΣ Constantine	Θ ΛΟΝΓΙΝΟΣ Longinos



B

## Ivory 11.B—Back

## INSCRIPTION IN THE FORM OF A CROSS:

Κ ΠΡΙΝ ΚΡΑΤΑΙΩ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΩ ΧΣ ΔΕΔΩΚΕ ΣΤΑΥΡΟΝ ΕΙ ΣΩΤΗΡΙΑΝ  
Κ ΝΥΝ ΔΕ ΤΟΥΤΟΝ ΕΝ ΘΩ ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΣ ΑΝΑΞ ΤΡΟΠΟΥΤΑΙ ΦΥΛΑ ΒΑΡΒΑΡΩΝ ΕΧΩΝ

Και πρὶν κραταιῷ δεσπότη Κωνσταντίνῳ  
Χριστὸς δέδωκε σταυρὸν εἰς σωτηρίαν  
Και νῦν δὲ τοῦτον ἐν Θεῷ Νικηφόρος  
Ἄναξ τροποῦται φύλα βαρβάρων ἔχων.

First, Christ gave the cross to the powerful Emperor Constantine for his salvation  
And now our emperor in God Nikephoros, puts to flight the barbarian tribes because he possesses it

## INSCRIPTION AROUND THE BORDER:

† Ο ΤΗΣ ΜΓ ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑΣ ΘΕΟΥ ΣΟΦΙΑΣ ΣΚΕΥΟΦΥΛΑΞ ΣΤΕΦΑΝΟΣ ΤΗ ΘΡΕΨΑΜΕΝΗ ΜΟΝΗ ΕΥΗΜΗΣ ΠΡΟΣΦΕΡΕΙ

Ὁ τῆς μεγάλης ἐκκλησίας Θεοῦ  
Σοφίας σκευοφύλαξ Στέφανος τῇ θρεψαμένῃ μονῇ εὐήμης προσφέρει

The skeuophylax of the Great Church of the wisdom of God, Stephanos, offers [this] to the monastery of Eueme, which educated him.



12. Diptych with an emperor and Christ.

A. Left wing: Dumbarton Oaks, Washington, DC  
(GW 2, no. 37). Tenth Century.

Size: 288 × 133 mm.

B. Right wing: Schlossmuseum, Gotha (GW 2,  
no. 36). Tenth Century.

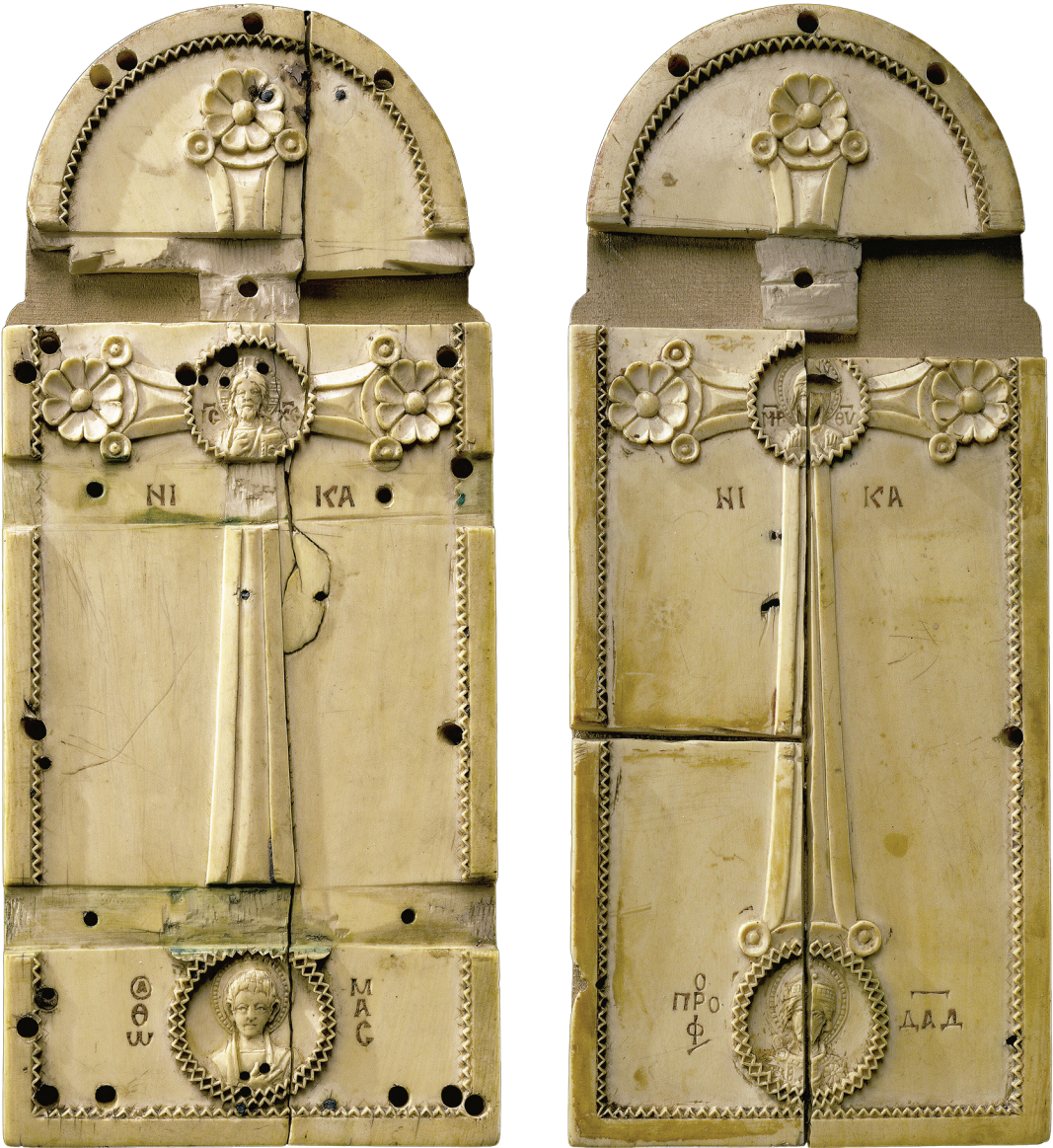
Size: 290 × 136 mm.

Photos: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection (A);  
© Stiftung Schloss Friedenstein Gotha (B).





13. Diptych with Christ and the Virgin (GW 2, no. 60).  
Domschatz, Halberstadt.  
Left leaf: 258 × 113 mm; Right leaf: 260 × 110 mm.  
Photo: © Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologie  
Sachsen-Anhalt, Juraj Lipták.



Ivory 13.

ΙΧ ΧΙ Jesus Christ	ΜΡ ΘΥ Theotokos
ΝΙ ΚΑ conquers	ΝΙ ΚΑ conquers
ΘΩ ΜΑΘ Thomas	Ο ΠΡΟΦ ΔΑΔ Prophet David



## 14. Three ivory panels from a miniature epistyle:

A. Panel with Sts. John and Paul (GW 2, no. 43). Museo Archeologico, Venice (Gemme e Avori 19).

Tenth century. Size: 248 × 133 mm.

B. Christ (GW 2, no. 54). Private collection (formerly Hirsch Collection, Switzerland).

Tenth century. Size: 248 × 132 mm.

C. Panel with Sts. Andrew and Peter. Kunsthistorisches Museum, Vienna (Inv. 8136; GW 2, no. 44).

Tenth century. Size: 242 × 133 mm.

Photos: Su concessione del Ministero dei beni e delle attività culturali e del turismo (A); Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection (B); © KHM, Vienna (C).



A

## Ivory 14.A

ΣΚΕΥΟΣ ΘΕΟΥΡΓΟΝ ΣΥΛΛΑΛΕΙ ΤΩΙ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΩΙ  
ΒΛΑΒΗΣ ΣΚΕΠΕΣΘΑΙ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΝ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΝ

The instrument of God [Paul] speaks together with the chaste man [John] so that the emperor Constantine be protected from harm

Θ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓ/  
St. John the Theologian

Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ  
St. Paul



B



C

Ivory 14.B

ΙC ΧC  
Jesus Christ

Ivory 14.C

ΩC ΑΝΤΑΔΕΛΦΟΙ ΜΥΣΤΟΛΕΚΤΑΙ ΤΩΝ ΑΝΩ  
ΝΕΜΟΙΤΕ ΑΥΤΡΟΝ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΩ  
As brothers knowledgeable about the divine mysteries of the world above, may you give relief to the emperor Constantine

Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΑΝΔΡΕΑΣ  
St. Andrew

Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΠΕΤΡΟΣ  
St. Peter



15. One ivory panel from a second miniature epistyle (GW 2, no. 45)

Panel with Sts. John and Paul. Grünes Gewölbe, Staatliche Kunstsammlungen, Dresden (inv. II 52). Tenth century.

Size: 245 × 129 mm.

Photo: bpk/Staatliche Kunstsammlungen Dresden/  
Jürgen Karpinski



#### Ivory 15.

ΚΕΥΟΣ ΘΕΟΥΡΓΟΝ ΣΥΛΛΑΛΕΙ ΤΩ ΠΑΡΘΕΝΩ  
ΒΛΑΒΗΣ ΚΕΠΕΣΘΑΙ ΔΕΣΠΟΤΗΝ ΚΩΝΣΤΑΝΤΙΝΟΝ

The instrument of God [Paul] speaks together with the chaste man [John] so that the emperor Constantine be protected from harm

Θ ΙΩΑΝΝΗΣ Ο ΘΕΟΛΟΓ/  
St. John the Theologian

Ο ΑΓΙΟΣ ΠΑΥΛΟΣ  
St. Paul